# SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 478. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 26TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.



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SHORT STORIES

No. 478. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending Feb. 26th, 1898.

# Panther Eyes.

A MAN and a woman—Nature had done the grouping—sat on a rustic seat in the later afternoon.

The man was middle-aged, slender, swarthy, with the expression of a poet and the complexion of a pirate—a man at whom one would look again.

The woman was young, blond, and graceful, with something in her figure and movements suggesting the word "lithe." She was dressed in a grey gown with odd brown marking in the texture. She may have been beautiful. One could not readily say, for her eyes denied attention to all else. They were grey-green, long and narrow, with an expression defying analysis. One could only know that they were disquieting.

The man and the woman talked.

"Yes," said the woman, "I love you, Heaven knows. But marry you, no! I cannot—will not!"

"Irene, you have said that many times, yet always have denied me a reason. I've a right to know; to prove my fortitude if I have it. Give me a reason."

"For loving you?"

"A reason for not marrying me—I've a right to know. I will know!"

He had risen and was standing before her with clenched hands, on his face a scowl. He looked as if he might attempt to learn by strangling her. She sat looking up into his face with a fixed, set expression that was utterly without emotion or sentiment. Yet it had something in it that tamed his resentment and made him shiver.

"You are determined to have my reason?" she asked in a tone that was entirely mechanical.

"If you please—if I'm not asking too much."

"Very well, you shall know. I am insane!"

Then she told him her story:

Edited By C. Arthur Pearson

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In a little log house containing a single room sparely and rudely furnished, crouching on the floor against one of the walls, lived Charles Marlowe, his wife and child.

Marlowe was of the now extinct class of Canadian pioneersmen who found their most acceptable surroundings in sylvan solitudes. With Charles Marlowe in the wilderness, sharing the dangers, hardships, and privations of that strange life, were his wife and child, to whom he was passionately attached. The woman was still young enough to be comely, new enough to the awful isolation of her lot to be cheerful. By withholding the large capacity for happiness which the simple satisfactions of the forest life could not have filled, Providence had dealt well with her. In her light household tasks, her child, her husband, and a few books, she found abundant provision for her needs.

One morning in midsummer, Marlowe took down his rifle from the wooden hooks on the wall and signified his intention of getting game.

"We've meat enough," said the wife. "Please don't go out to-day. I dreamt last night, oh, such a dreadful thing! I cannot recollect it, but I'm almost sure that it will come to pass if you go hunting."

Marlowe laughed.

"Try to remember," he said. "Perhaps you dreamt that baby had lost the power of speech."

The woman yielded. Lacking the gift of humour, she could not hold out against his kindly badinage. So, with a kiss for the mother and a kiss for the child, he left the house and closed the door upon his happiness for ever.

At nightfall he had not returned. The woman prepared supper and waited. Then she put baby to bed and sang softly to her until she slept. By this time the fire on the hearth had burnt out, and the room was lighted by a single candle. This she afterwards placed in the open window as a sign and welcome to the hunter if he should approach from that side.

As the night wore on she became not less anxious, but more drowsy, and at last rested her arms upon the bed by the child and her head upon the arms. The candle in the window burnt down to the socket, sputtered and flared a moment, and went out unobserved, for the woman slept, and sleeping she dreamt.

Her dreams were of trouble and disaster, and she awoke with a start and a cry of fear. As a sense of her actual surroundings came slowly back to her, she felt for the child and assured herself by its breathing that all was well with it. Then, moved by some impulse for which she probably could not have accounted, she rose and took the sleeping babe in her arms holding it close against her breast.

The head of the child's cot was against the wall to which the woman now turned her back as she stood.

Lifting her eyes, she saw two bright objects starring the darkness with a reddish-green glow. She took them to be two coals on the hearth, but with her returning sense of direction, came the disquieting consciousness that they were not in that quarter of the room, moreover were too high, being nearly at the level of her eyes. She looked fixedly at the objects and shivered. They were the eyes of a panther.

The beast was at the open window directly opposite and not five paces away. Nothing but those terrible eyes were visible, but in the dreadful tumult of her feelings as the situation disclosed itself to her understanding she somehow knew that the animal was standing on its hind feet, supporting itself with its paws on the window-ledge.

Her knees failed her, and by degrees, instinctively striving to avoid a sudden movement that might bring the beast upon her, she sank to the floor, crouched against the wall, and tried to shield the babe with her trembling body without withdrawing her gaze from the luminous orbs that were killing her.

No thought of her husband came to her in her agony, no hope or suggestion to rescue or escape. She could think of nothing but the danger to her babe.

Motionless now and in absolute silence, she waited her doom, the moments growing to hours, to years, and still those devilish eyes maintained their watch.

Returning to his cabin late at night with a deer on his shoulder Charles Marlowe tried the door. It did not yield. He knocked. There was no answer. He laid down his deer and went round to the window. As he turned the angle of the building he fancied he heard a sound as of stealthy footfalls and a rustling in the undergrowth of the forest, but they were too slight for certainty even to his practised ear.

Approaching the window, and, to his surprise, finding it open, he threw his leg over the sill and entered. All was darkness and silence! He groped his way to the fireplace, struck a match and lit a candle. Then he looked about.

Cowering on the floor against a wall was his wife, clasping his child. As he sprang towards her she broke into laughter, long, loud, and mechanical, devoid of gladness and devoid of sense—the laughter that is not out of keeping with the clanking of a chain. Hardly knowing what he did, he extended his arms. She laid the babe in them. It was dead—passed to death in its mother's embrace. That is what occurred during a night in a forest, but not all of it did Irene Marlowe relate to Jenner Brading; not all of it was known to her. When she had concluded, the sun was below the horizon, and the long summer twilight had begun to deepen in the hollows of the land. For some moments Brading was silent, expecting the narrative to be carried forward to some definite connection with the conversation introducing it, but the narrator was as silent as he, her face averted, her hands clasping and unclasping themselves, as they lay in her lap.

"It is a sad, a terrible story," said Brading at last, "but I do not understand. You call Charles Marlowe, father; that I know. That he is old before his time, broken by some sorrow, I have seen, But, pardon me, you said that you—that you——"

"That I am insane," said the girl, without a movement of head or body.

"But, Irene, you say—please, dear, do not look away from me—you say that the child was dead, not demented."

"Yes, that one. I am the second. I was born three months after that night."

Brading was again silent. He was a trifle dazed and could not at once think of the right thing to say. Her face was still turned away. In his embarrassment he reached impulsively towards the hands that lay closing and unclosing in her lap, but something—he could not have said what—restrained him. He then remembered vaguely that he had never altogether cared to take her hand.

"Is it likely," she resumed, "under such circumstances that I could be quite—sane!"

Brading did not reply. He was preoccupied with a new thought that was taking shape in his mind—a

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theory. It might throw a light, albeit a lurid one, upon such doubt of her sanity as her own assertion had not dispelled.

In a country which was still new and sparsely populated, many stories of animals were current, and he suddenly remembered one that had caused its little excitement, but to which he had paid no attention at the time. Its likeness to the story to which he had just listened now impressed him as perhaps more than accidental. For it was of a panther which had glared through the window of a house; was it not possible that the one story had in some way suggested the other?

Brading recalled certain circumstances of the girl's history and disposition of which, with love's simplicity, he had hitherto been heedless, such as her solitary life with her father, and her strange fear of the night. Surely in such a mind imagination once kindled might burn with a lawless flame, penetrating and enveloping the entire structure. That she was mad, he could no longer doubt. She had only mistaken an effect of her mental disorder for its cause, bringing into imaginary relation with her own personality the vagaries of the local mythmakers.

With some vague intention of testing his new "theory," and no very definite notion of how to set about it, he said gravely, but with hesitation:

"Irene, dear, tell me—I beg you will not take offence, but tell me."

"I have told you," she interrupted, speaking with a passionate earnestness that he had not known her to show. "I have already told you that we cannot marry. Is anything else worth saying?"

Before he could stop her she had sprung from her seat and without another word was gliding away among the trees towards her father's house.

He stood watching her in silence until she had vanished in the gloom. Suddenly he started as if he had been shot. His face took on an expression of amazement and alarm. In one of the black shadows into which she had disappeared he had caught a quick, brief glimpse of gleaming eyes! For an instant he was dazed and irresolute, then pulling a pistol from his pocket he dashed into the wood after her shouting: "Irene, Irene, look out! The panther, the panther!"

In a moment he had passed through the fringe of forest into open ground, and saw the girl's grey skirt vanishing into her father's door. No panther was visible.

* * * * *

Jenner Brading, attorney-at-law, lived in a cottage at the edge of the town. Directly behind the dwelling was the forest.

Brading's bedroom was at the rear of the house with a single window facing the forest. One night he was awakened by a noise at the window. He could hardly have said what it was like. With a little shrill of the nerves he sat up in bed and laid hold of the revolver which he had put under his pillow. The room was in absolute darkness, but he knew where to direct his eyes, and there he held them, awaiting in silence what further might occur.

He could now dimly discern the aperture in the window a square of lighter black. Suddenly there appeared at its lower edge two gleaming eyes that turned with a malignant lustre, inexpressibly horrible. Brading's heart gave a great jump, then seemed to stand still. A chill passed along his spine and through his hair. He felt the blood forsake his cheeks. He could not have cried out, but being a man of courage he would not have done so if he could.

Slowly the glowing eyes rose with a steady motion that seemed an approach, and slowly rose Brading's right hand holding the pistol! He fired!

Blinded by the flash and stunned by the report, Brading nevertheless heard, or fancied that he heard, the wild, high scream of the panther, so human in sound. Leaping from the bed, he hastily dressed himself, and, pistol in hand, sprang from the door, meeting two or three men who came running up from the road.

A brief explanation was followed by a cautious search at the rear of the house. The grass was wet with dew. Beneath the window it had been trodden and partly levelled for a wide space, from which a devious trail, visible in the light of a lantern, led away into the bushes.

While they were proceeding, Brading stumbled and fell upon his hands, which as he rose and rubbed them together were wet and sticky. On examination they were seen to be red with blood.

An encounter unarmed with a wounded panther was not agreeable to their taste. All but Brading turned back. He, with lantern and pistol, pushed courageously forward into the wood. Passing through a difficult undergrowth, he came into a small opening, and there his courage had its reward, for there he found the body of his victim.

But it was not a panther. What it was is told, even to this day, upon a weather-stained headstone in the village churchyard and for many years was attested daily at the graveside by the bent figure and sorrow-seamed face of old Marlowe, to whose soul and to the soul of his strange, unhappy child, be peace—peace and reparation.

MARTIN SERFUS.

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# THE EMPRESS OF THE EARTH

## The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

*Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.*

SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, who has spent a portion of his life in almost every country in Europe studying the various nationalities and customs in all classes of life, falls desperately in love with an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition. The means he employs for this purpose are immeasurably vaster than the end.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where, by reason of his authority upon all matters connected with Europe and his high rank, he soon becomes a member of the Japanese Parliament. He rapidly becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies. The *Halcyon* is sent to Malta convoyed by the *Majestic*. In the Bay of Biscay *La Gloire*, a French battleship, is encountered, and fights the *Majestic*, which ultimately runs her opponent and then sinks. The crew is saved by the *Halcyon*.

Great Britain now prepares for war. A picket boat in the Channel sights a foreign fleet convoying transports, and John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman home on sick leave, brings the news to Portsmouth. Immediately troops are concentrated at Brighton under the command of Sir Evelyn Wood, and the Channel fleet sails from Spithead to face the foe. John Hardy gets on board the *Jupiter*, and, solely by his strength of purpose, is permitted to remain.

### CHAPTER VII.

### In the Channel.

Dr. Yen How had his Idea; and John Hardy had his. Nothing in the world is of such supreme importance as an Idea.

Dr. Yen How's Idea was: that the cupidity and blind greed of the white races could be used by the yellow man as a means to the yellow man's triumph; the white races could be made to exterminate each other preparatory to the sweep, in hundreds of millions, of the yellow man over an exhausted and decimated Europe. Hence the grants by China of territories to Russia, Germany, and France—and the consequent war.

John Hardy's Idea was: that the New Naval Warfare admitted of every bit as much delicate skill and shrewd sea-tactics as the Old; that the sailor-hero was still possible—the new Drake, the new Richard Grenville, the new Nelson; that it was not (as everyone believed) a mere question of weight of metal, or superiority of gun-fire now any more than it ever was; that a man born with the sea in his soul, and the sea-breeze in his hair, like the old sailor-souls, would still do the trick.

This was his Idea; and he had also this other, subsidiary to that first one—had it more vitally than any other modern Briton: that nothing in the world was of the least importance, except England, and the march of England, and the glory of England.

Perhaps the lad was utterly unconscious that he had these ideas—but he had them; they were there in him, radically and profoundly; and if he was unconscious of them, as he was of his kidneys, or his liver, that was an added proof of their radicalness and profoundity.

His nature was as elementary, and simple, and strong, as the nature of Dr. Yen How.

Just as the captain of the *Jupiter* flung his hand irritably and turned away from him, John Hardy caught the sleeve of a middy who was hurrying past, and said eagerly:

"I have got permission to see the row, after all!"

"Good biz," the middy nodded, as he passed on. "I wish you joy!"

And presently he was at the sleeve of a sub., saying:

"Here I am, you see. I have got permission to look on at the row, after all!"

"It is like your ubiquitous luck, Hardy," the other said, and hurried by.

John Hardy was usually more taciturn and retiring than this; the fact that he went about in this way volunteering the news about himself showed that he was more or less excited, out of himself. He was going to see a fight—a real one this time. Up to this moment he had no idea what a naval battle was actually like. Summer Manœuvres were quite a different affair.

His coldly practical nature was illustrated by the fact that the grudging quality of the captain's permission did not at all lessen his satisfaction; he had got it—that was enough. He looked only at results.

The object of the enemy was to effect a landing at Shoreham, or near it—a quiet spot, less conspicuous than Brighton or Worthing. They hoped by their prompt and

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sudden arrival, so soon after the declaration of war, to catch the British Fleet napping—as, in fact, they partially did—and so to be able to land three Corps d'Armée—consisting of 120,000 men, 360 guns, 30,000 horses, and a fairly adequate commissariat and field-transport *matériel*, without the inconvenience of first of all undergoing a naval engagement.

Their sudden presence on the shores of Britain proved that war must have been secretly premeditated and prepared for by them some time before the declaration of hostilities—another indication of that suspicion of treachery which, all through, characterised the action of the Allies in this war. But the excellent telescopes of the coast-guards, and the brisk scouts of the British fleet, served to give a warning which, though late, was not hopelessly so. The enemy, moreover, in their over-confidence, had committed an error in tactics in approaching too near the coast while there was still a little twilight.

Off Bognor the captains and commanders of all ships in the Channel Squadron were assembled in the large ward-room of the *Magnificent*. Rear-Admiral John Fellowes had signalled half-speed, and summoned them to a conference.

The officers sat round him, hanging eagerly on his words, as the Rear-Admiral began to speak.

"Of course, gentlemen," he said, "it has been a matter of anxious consideration to me in what formation we are to approach the enemy. What makes our arrangements rather difficult is the fact that we know little at the moment of their present disposition. But it seems to me that one thing should be certain—namely, that their troopships and liners will be stationed well in the rear, while the whole weight of metal of their ships of war will be put forward to protect their land-forces on the liners. They will naturally assume that our first care and trouble will be to destroy their land-forces in our panic at the idea of invasion, and their whole effort will be bent upon protecting them, and frustrating us.

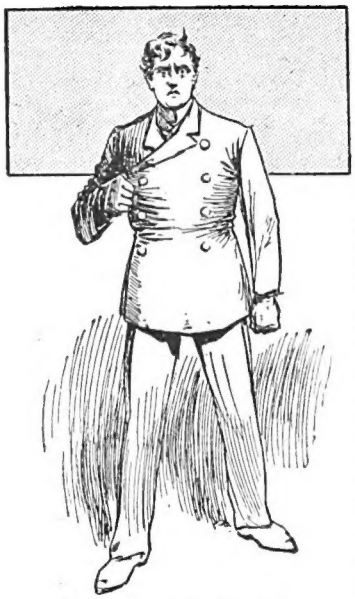
"Of course, in thus guessing our objects they are right enough. We wish, naturally, to baulk the present attempt at invasion; but I must point out to you that our object, to be wise, *must* be two-fold, and that our secondary object is more important than our first. I mean, that from the reports we have received of the number of transports, it is impossible that the enemy can have with them a land-force of more than 120,000 to 160,000 men, and that, even supposing these effect a landing, the land forces at present in Britain are possibly quite capable of dealing with them, *provided* the enemy be not reinforced by fresh increments of invading army-corps in the very near future.

"It must, then, be our business to make such fresh invasions impracticable for some little time by shattering, as far as we can, the enemy's powers of convoy, that is, their battleships. For I need not point out to you that the combined countries of France, Russia, and Germany may place several millions of armed men in England, practically as fast as they choose, *if* only they have ships to bring them over, *and* a convoy to protect them from the battleships and coast defence ironclads lying at British stations. And against such forces the land force of Britain would, of course, be impotent.

"This, then, is my point of view. We must send back our invaders with such a rip in their clattered metal that these particular battleships shall have had enough of invasion for some little time.

"In the effort we shall all probably perish, but that, I take it, is not with any of us a matter of salient importance.

"What I propose is this: That we approach to within five miles of the enemy in our present formation; if they approach us in line, or in a semi-circle convex or concave, then we echelon right and left respectively, each battleship fastening on the nearest antagonist as fortune may decide, while gunboats, torpedo-boats, and fast third-class cruisers like the *Pelorus*, will deploy right and left in an attempt to get behind the enemy, where they will do all the damage they can, special attention being given to the destruction of rudders and screws, so as to obviate their ramming-power.



*Hardy leapt to his feet.*

"If, on the other hand, they confront us in file, then we retain our formation, the first ship attacking the first, the second the second, and so on.

"My instructions at present cannot, of course, but be general, and much, in any case, must be left to individual initiative — happily so, I think, in the case of British commanders. Further orders will, if necessary, be sent out by trumpet-call, and passed from ship to ship in both files."

A bow of acquiescence went all round the table. The policy was felt to be bad for the immediate present, but wise for the immediate future.

At that moment the flag-lieutenant of the Rear-Admiral entered the room.

"The enemy's fleet is reported in sight, sir," he said.

"Ah! what is the hour?"

"Nearly three bells, sir—second dog-watch."

"What has been made out?"

"Only three electric search-lights in a line—probably they are fifteen miles off."

"Are preparations well advanced on board?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the same, I presume, in all your ships, gentlemen?"

They all expressed assent.

"Well, then, gentlemen, here you see, we are in for it—'it' meaning the first great naval battle of modern times. I dare say that we shall conduct ourselves with credit, fighting as we do in the name of justice and our country. In half-an-hour, say, we shall be face to face with these people. I recommend that an extra ration of grog be served out to all blue-jackets, meantime, and that all final preparations be pushed forward. My flag-lieutenant will at once send up as my signal for a general engagement, the words: 'For England.' I think that is all I need say now, except to wish you a very hearty good-bye, and a fine fight, and the aid and blessing of Almighty God."

The officers, having saluted, some of them pressed the hand of the Rear-Admiral, and trooping hurriedly forth with mutual *adieux*, and half-satiric, half-sad *morituri salutamuses*, went away through the gloom, each to his own ship.

The snouts of the ponderous bulks of metal were ploughing and forging leisurely through the sea.

Yonder, brilliantly lit by flash-light on the starboard flagship, fluttered the battle-word of the coming combat: "For England."

But the night now had darkened. A wind freshened from the sou'-west, and drove sombre expeditions of slow cloud over the blurred face of the scurrying and struggling moon. She seemed affrighted at the pregnant silence of this gliding navy—a silence pregnant with a thousand thunders. But the sea was fairly calm, crisped only with short, low fringes of foam driven by the wind.

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The *Jupiter* was the second ship in the port file—that is to say, on the side nearest the coast as the fleet forged eastwards.

Her captain had been so pre-occupied with affairs during the bustle of the afternoon, that he had eaten nothing for hours. Almost immediately on reaching his own ship after leaving the Rear-Admiral's, he hurriedly descended to his own quarters, and sat down to swallow some cold mouthfuls.

Happening to lift his eyes as he ate, he saw, sitting on a couch in the apartment, and quietly watching him, his guest, John Hardy. He had forgotten John.

"Well, John," he said, across a gag of mutton, "so you have dared, after all. In spite of my orders, eh, sir? Well, I suppose I must make the best of you, as you are here. But you are a foolish lad, you know."

"It can't be of any consequence, sir," said John. "I wanted to see a fight. It is always experience."

"Yes, yes. But a young man like you. Have you no care for your life, sir?"

"It can't be of any consequence, sir."

"'A day less or more,
On sea, or on shore,
We die—does it matter when?'

"Is that the sort of sentiment, eh, John?"

"Something of that sort, sir."

"Well, you might do worse, perhaps. But what is the matter with you? The sweat is rolling down your face."

"They have been allowing me to help a little about the ship, sir."

"What, with your own hands, sir?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, John Hardy—I shall never have another chance of telling you, so let me tell you now, boy—I must say that I regard you as a most worthy specimen of the Navy. Your school and cadet careers were not very brilliant, were they? Rather—ahem—well—we will say nothing of that. But in other respects—you know what I would say, perhaps—I give you my Certificate—that sort of thing. Certainly, you are as bold as a fly, modest, gentle, thoroughly English—a little—er—original, perhaps, eh, sir? Like your father, eh, sir? But with the makings of a great sailor in you, John Hardy. Pity you should be throwing yourself away like this."

John was blushing.

"You are very kind, sir," he just muttered.

"Do not mention it. The circumstances excuse one, you know, in being quite frank."

"Quite so, sir."

John, all the time, was burning to ask a question. Suddenly he said:

"Might I ask, sir, what are the proposed tactics for the battle?"

"Well, John, there's going to be plenty of fun, apparently, for you to see. The idea is to concentrate all our efforts upon the battleships and cruisers, so as to render it out of the question, if possible, for this particular fleet ever again to act as convoy to an invading force."

"And the liners and transports, sir?"

"They are to be left severely alone this time."

"To land their troops on British soil, sir?"

"Yes, boy—yes—*this* time."

Suddenly John Hardy leapt to his feet, his hands clenched, his face inflamed.

"Oh, *sir!*" he cried.

The Captain looked at him in surprise, saying:

"Well, what's the matter?"

"Captain MacLeod, England will never bear such an indignity!"

"Well, my boy, but War, you understand, is not fun and heroics—it is dead earnest. England will *have* to bear it, I'm afraid."

"*She shan't, by God!*" cried John Hardy, striking out his right fist, suddenly riven and smitten by the Call of Heaven within him.

Then immediately he fell back upon the couch, sobbing bitterly into his two hands.

The Captain stood over him, patting his shoulder, murmuring:

"Poor John! poor John!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### The Battle.

The fleets drew nearer, vaguely revealed to each other by means of electric search-lights.

That morning, as early as five o'clock, the French, Russian, and German national anthems had been played on board the fleet of the Allies at Brest, and the colours saluted. Immediately afterwards the ships steamed out of harbour. The land-troops were already massed on board the transports.

To prevent their movements being watched and reported, they had proceeded at a high rate of speed under forced draught, never very far from the French coast, till they reached the longitude of Fécamp; then, striking directly northward for Beachy Head, had slackened speed about five o'clock, forty miles from the coast; then, as the twilight gathered, they had deflected their course to about West by North, making leisurely for the neighbourhood of Shoreham. When they first became aware of the approach of the British fleet, they were moving almost directly westward, as the British vessels were moving directly eastward.

The formation of the enemy was in a quadruple line. In the front were fourteen battleships at twelve cables' interval; in the second, cruisers of the three classes; in the third, gun-boats, torpedo-boats, and composite gun-vessels; in the fourth the array of liners and troopships bearing the land forces.

The British Rear-Admiral had rightly surmised what would be the first action of the French Contre-Amiral; his primary thought was for the troopships. Out from the flagship went a trumpet-call, repeated far over the ocean in a long line of sonorous and brazen-lunged iteration. Down the files of ships it went braying, a voice that died and instantly rose in vibrant outcry again, commanding all troopers and liners to go pacing backwards twelve miles to westward, and there maintain a hollow square till further notice.

Through the wide region of black smoke which poured forth now over the Channel from the entire Allied fleet, in their effort to get up steam, flocked the captains of ships to a hurried conference with Contre-Amiral des Vismes de Monthier on the *Amiral Baudin*.

His recommendation was, that the Allied battleships should deploy in two double lines, converging inwards toward the British ships, just as the British ships (as could be already surmised) were diverging outward toward the Allies. He said: "We have fourteen battleships—they, I take it, eight." (In reality, the British battleships only numbered seven, for the *Majestic* was gone.) "I propose, then, that the four battleships of our present line now furthest to starboard will form the outer converging line of starboard attack, and the next four the inner converging line, parallel to the outer; thus, toward the coast, two starboard lines of eight Allied battleships will have between their broadsides a line of four British battleships—and the contest, I think, should be short.

"In the same way with our port battleships; the three furthest to port will form the outer converging line, the next three the inner—thus two port lines of six Allied battleships will have between their broadsides a line of four British battleships—eight to four, and six to four: the contest should not be long, messieurs. I even suggest, as a good point of tactics, that, in view of our enormous preponderance in weight, we should make our victory almost instantaneous by placing a very short interval indeed

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between combatant ships—say, half-a-mile at the most; for, of course, the shorter the conflict the less our damage—a point of immeasureable importance to us at present, considering the *rôle* we have to fill in acting as convoy to more invading land-forces in the near future. I need not point out, too, that an enemy's ship, hemmed in between two hostile ships, will be the more hampered as to her power of ramming, the closer the quarters. But we have little time for talk; cruisers, gunboats, and composite vessels will find their work cut out according to the dispositions of the enemy's less important flotilla. I can only hope that these recommendations meet with your approval, as I know they do with that of my colleague, Vice-Admiral von Grüdenau. Adieu, then, messieurs! This temporary interruption to our progress will, in less than a quarter of an hour, be overcome. *Vive la France! Vivent—vivent—les Alliés!*"

*He was gone.*

"*Vive la France—vivent les Alliés!*" repeated the Allied commanders all round the table, as they raised to their lips glasses of wine poured from the carafes; then, saluting, they hurried to their gigs.

And none too soon. They had hardly reached their ships, and turned them to the performance of the prescribed evolutions, when the fleet of England was upon them.

The Contre-Amiral of the Allied fleet had made a small error in guessing the formation which the British fleet of battleships would assume in making the attack. He had naturally assumed that, their number being so small, they would meet the Allied fleet in two divergent single lines of ships; but the British Rear-Admiral, hoping for some small, hypothetical advantage, had, as we have seen, decided to advance in two divergent echelons, or step-shape formations. The error was of little importance, for, as soon as the fleets approached sufficiently, the Allies would detect the formation of the British, and slightly modify their plan accordingly.

Unfortunately for them, however, the eyes of John Hardy, with their faculty of sight and insight, were abroad over the sea that night.

He had burst into sobs in the Captain's-quarters of the *Jupiter*. The Captain stood over him, patting his shoulder compassionately, wondering at the intensity of the lad's pride and patriotism.

But it was not pride, nor patriotism, which was then rending the frail frame of John Hardy with sobs—it was something far more.

To hear irresistibly within you the Heavenly Call to be up and save the world, and then, at once, to be overwhelmed with the bitter sense of the strong Commonplace, and with the feeling of sheer impotence in the face of it—this is the tragedy of genius.

John sobbed. There had risen in him a sublime strength, an immoderate arrogance, and with it the tingling consciousness that, were he that night the Admiral of the Fleet, he would and could somehow save England from the shame of an invading foot; then, all at once, he remembered that he was by no means the Admiral of the Fleet. So he sobbed.

But his sobs were lucky just at that moment, as many things which he did had a trick of being. They softened and touched the Captain, just at the right instant.

"Well, John, I must be going," he said.

John lifted up his hot face.

"Where shall I take my place, sir?" he asked.

"Your place? I should stay here if I were you."

"May I, sir, if it is not asking too much ——"

"What?"

"Come with you, sir."

"Where to?"

"The conning-tower, sir."

"My good fellow!"

"If it is not asking too much, sir. One must see the fight from somewhere, as one happens to be here."

"Well—but—the conning-tower!"

"I shall make myself small, sir. You won't talk to me, nor I, of course, to you. A guest chooses his lodging in a case of doubt, you know, sir."

He was smiling now, and when he smiled his face was wonderfully winning.

The Captain hesitated, and was lost. He said:

"Well, you are an original, John, that's all I can say—like your poor father before you, boy. Come along, then—come along!"

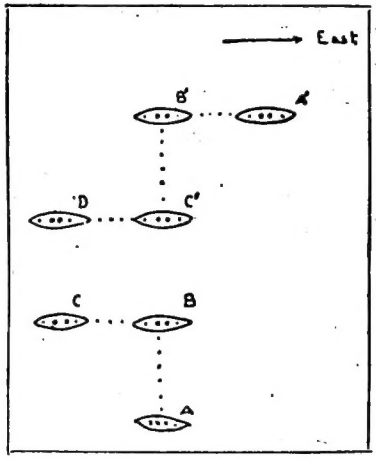
They ran briskly up.

Suddenly the still night was a-sound. The two fleets were about to mingle.

At that moment, so great was the disparity of weight, that the wildest hope of patriotism could not have predicted anything but swift destruction to the British fleet; nor was the object of the British captains victory, but only the disablement, as far as might be, of the enemy.

To explain the appalling ruin and havoc which one pair of seeing sailor-eyes brought upon the entire Allied squadron, we must employ diagrams.

The following is the formation in which the seven British battleships approached the enemy, with an interval of about a knot, or nautical mile, between each pair of ships, A being the Rear-Admiral's ship, the *Magnificent*, A′ the *Prince George* leading the starboard echelon, and B′ the *Jupiter*, bearing John Hardy.




The following is the formation in which, by the direction of the Contre-Amiral, the allied fleet of battle-ships advanced, about the same interval being preserved among

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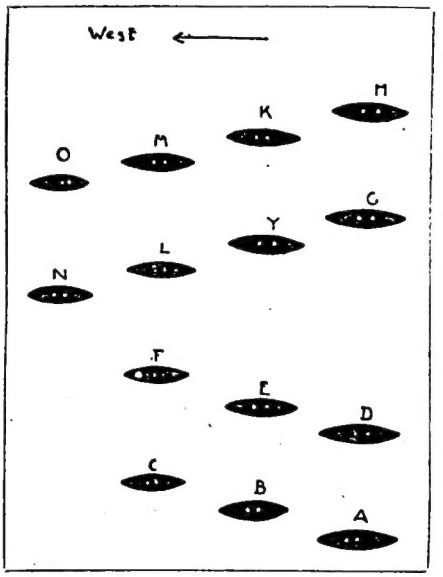
ship-pairs as among the British ship-pairs, counting a kilomètre as approximately equal to three-thirds of a mile.




The fleets had no sooner commenced to intermingle, than Hardy, standing now with Captain MacLeod in the conning-tower of the *Jupiter*, was in full possession of their method of advance; and he was no sooner in full possession of it, than he started, his eyes widened, and words burst from him.

"Sir, sir," he cried, "the enemy are advancing in two double files. It seems clear to me that they suppose us to be advancing in two single files."

"Yes, that is so," said the Captain unconcernedly, proceeding to give the order in which John had interrupted him.

"But, sir, sir," persisted John.

"Well, John, well," said the Captain, a little irritably at the second interruption.

"It seems to me, sir—really—that if the *Jupiter* and the *Victorious* both put out all external lights and lie low, the enemy will *continue* to think that we are in single file instead of in echelon, and then——"

Up leapt the Captain's arms.

"By gad, you are right, boy!" he cried, staring hard at John, his head struck into a sudden sideward suspension of silent meditation.

Then, in a flash, he saw it all—the whole inwardness of the boy's suggestion—the long vista of results—the whole huge drama of the enemy's disaster.

"Sir—Captain MacLeod——" said John, all eagerness.

"But to warn the *Victorious* in time?" mused the Captain.

"Send *me*, sir! Water from the engines—the picket-boat! The *Victorious* is only two miles off; I shall be there in three or four minutes."

"Well—I say yes. You understand, of course, that you will never come back."

"Thank you, Captain—good-bye—they are done for, Captain, by the Lord——!"

He was gone, rushing.

On board Her Majesty's ships of war things are done with a certain celerity; everything is oiled and easy, and goes off with the gliding smoothness of lightning. The *Jupiter* was carrying at her mast-head the bright white steam-light, on her starboard bow the usual green, and on her port bow the usual red, light; by the time these were out, and the whole ship plunged into darkness, the little picket-boat, under forced draught, was driving her head through two combs of foam, herself in darkness, with John Hardy and two bluejackets, in a direction nearly south.

She passed before the ram of the *Repulse* (C'), and in less than two minutes afterwards, Hardy was at the conning-tower of the *Victorious* (B).

Suddenly the *Victorious*, too, vanished into darkness.

The night was now very gloomy.

There remained a third ship, the *Mars* (D), whose presence it was desirable to conceal for the time being; the concealment was not so necessary, as she was more remote from the advancing fleet of the enemy, and by the time the significance of her presence in her then position was understood, the mischief intended might be done.

But John Hardy would leave nothing to chance. It was quite out of the question now, that if he attempted to reach the *Mars*, the little picket could live in the shattered sea-surface, into which, surely, in a minute's time all that area of water would be torn by shot and shell. Yet he dared. The little boat, in a very passion of haste, throbbing as though she would throb her little heart out, went panting north-westward toward the *Mars*.

Was he too late? There was a sudden shock and roar from the east, and in the night a dull glare, red and wrathful. He sat with the tiller-ropes in one hand, the other holding a double-glass to his eyes. A gust of wind had blown away his light straw hat, and the breeze was a-play in his hair.

A British first-class gunboat rushed sounding past him, hasting wrathfully to battle, washed in spray from stem to stern. Close by his starboard bow she dashed like an angry darting fish, leaving the little picket nodding and dipping in a choppy sea which almost swamped her in her hurried embassy. The next moment a shrapnel-shell burst into light a hundred yards before him. The fight had commenced—Bellona was abroad.

Was he too late? He knew now that to reach the *Mars* he must perish. Certainly, he could never return to the *Jupiter*. But he held on his way. He was in his element. Now he knew for what he was born; it was for this—the mixed and multitudinous roar of cannon sounding over the sea—England's sea—*his* sea! Something in his heart, in his life's blood, and in his very soul's soul, answered to it, was akin to it. He had never been really happy till this night. He held on his rash and desperate way.

His eyes were alight with battle.

Suddenly he said under his breath: "Bravo!"

The lights of the *Mars* had gone out into darkness.

Her captain—Captain Henderson—had noted, first, the extinguishing of the lights of the *Jupiter*, and had been puzzled; then the going out into darkness of the *Victorious*. He had stood with knit brows for nearly two minutes, and then had understood. A few seconds later the *Mars*, too, was invisible.

At once John Hardy put his helm to starboard, running about north-east, to regain the *Jupiter*. He was now hurrying into the very region of the starboard limb of the enemy's fleet, and by the time he neared the *Repulse*, that ship was already engaged with two of the enemy. In another half-minute the sea around these three was a white tempest of thrashed and spurting spray, as when thronging hail flogs furiously upon a lake, and the sky about them was a vague domed cavern of coppery flame. Never did sailor, in so small a craft, run the gauntlet of a more ticklish peril, passing through a sea crowded with torpedoes, and cracking shells, and balls of fire. But the picket boat never once so much as swerved; straight onward she throbbed, through the region of lurid half-light, carrying at her stern-post the Union Jack; then once more into darkness. In another minute John Hardy sprung up the side of the dark *Jupiter*, and ran to the conning-tower.

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"You have done it, then, John?" said Captain MacLeod; "I congratulate you from my soul."

"Thank you, sir. Now, perhaps, I think we may see these fellows banged a little——"

*Blood covered his face, and the breeze in his hair gave him the look of wildness and dismay.*

"We may, John, we may—thanks to you, boy. Wait, wait—let us see."

It did not take long to see.

In a very few minutes the condition of the battle was this: Two French ships, one on each side of her, were battering the *Magnificent* into shambles; two more, one on each side of her, were making a wreck of the *Prince George;* two more were tackling the *Repulse;* the *Jupiter* was not fighting, the *Victorious* was not fighting, the *Mars* was not fighting—the Allies being unconscious at the moment of their presence in their then unsuspected positions; one German ship was in collision with a French on the starboard side of the *Resolution* (C); one French ship was ramming another French ship between the *Resolution* and the *Mars;* another French ship was blowing a German ship out of the water at a point a long way to the west of the British fleet; and two German ships were cruising about in the same longitude,

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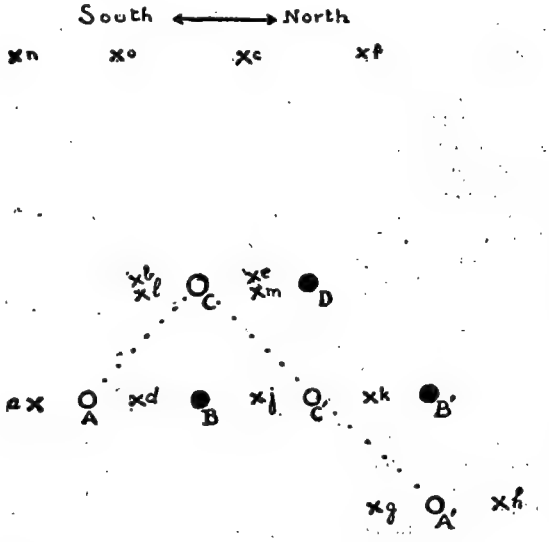
searching in vain for two enemies which should have been there, and were not.

Thus, of the fourteen Allied battleships, six only were engaged in actual conflict with three British vessels, while a fourth British vessel was pouring a tempest of barbette quick-firing, and machine gun-shot into the two ships in collision on her starboard side, and watching the sinking of a French ship rammed by a French on her port side. How this complexity of tragedy overwhelmed the enemy will be readily seen by the following plan of the battle, published in every London newspaper the next morning. Crosses and small letters stand for Allied ships, circles and capitals stand for British, the three British ships which put out their lights being printed in black:




It will be seen from the plan that, the lights of the three ships being extinguished, the starboard limb of the Allied squadron saw a straight line of British ships—namely, **C**, **C'**, **A'**—consisting of the *Resolution*, the *Repulse*, and the *Prince George*. This made them certain of their conjecture that the British were advancing in two single lines, and they accordingly proceeded to port and starboard of these three, in order to attack on both broadsides; but expecting not three, but four, British vessels in each limb, the Allied ships *n* and *o* went on south-westward to seek them.

Meanwhile, on their port side also, the Allied ships saw a straight line of British ships, namely, A, C, consisting of the *Magnificent* and—once again—the *Resolution*. Believing that this limb consisted also of four distinct ships, two of which were further on, and not appreciating the fact that the same *Resolution* (C) was about to be attacked by two of their starboard fleet, they steamed forward. Two of their ships, *c* and *f*, reached the stations indicated on the plan, surprised to find no enemy; while two others, *b* and *e*, came into contact with two of their own ships of the starboard limb, *l* and *m*. Before she could discover her error, or stop her speed, *m* had hopelessly rammed *e*, and the *Resolution* was pouring in a murderous hail on both *b* and *l*, which had similarly collided, *b* at this time being an inert mass floating helplessly with rudder and screws shattered by *l*; while, yonder to the West, *c* and *o*, both searching for the missing enemy, made a sudden discovery, and began to batter each other with barbette and shrapnel, before even guessing at the hopeless error, and the blind delusion, and the harum-scarum of disaster, in which they had been involved by the simple expedient of a sailor lad.

At this moment—simultaneously—the three darkened ships opened fire; and peaceful merchantmen, heading with slow industry on their diverse ways, heard far and wide over the Channel, the shock and rumour of that complex clamour.

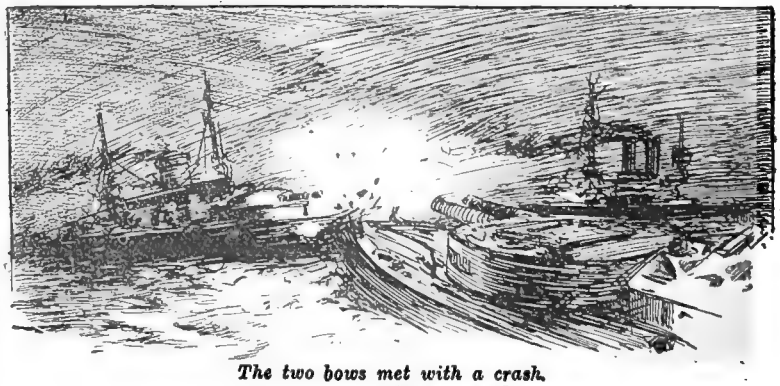
It was a fearful battle. Nearly all the Allied ships which were in actual combat with British ships, and which had taken up their positions in the hope of pouring in a double broadside on a British ship, one from each side, now suddenly found themselves in the same predicament which they had planned for the British; for, without warning, a dark, unsuspected ship opened fire upon them, placing between two fires those who had planned two fires for others.

A glance at the diagram will show how this came about. Thus, the ship *k* was between the fires of the *Jupiter* and the *Repulse*, the ship *y* between the fires of the *Repulse* and the *Victorious*, and the ship *d* between the fires of the *Victorious* and the *Magnificent*.

As yet, no colours had been struck, but the *Deutschland* (*b*), whose rudder had been shattered by the *Sadowa* (*l*), was a barely-floating ruin sinking fast, with only one water-tight compartment uninvaded by the inswirling waters; the *Prince George* (A) was just plunging—with screws high in air, and a shriek from her burst and hissing engines that reached to heaven—to her last resting place; the *Majestueuse* (*e*), with a strange fatal suddenness, had sunk on being rammed by the *Formidable* (*m*) and almost immediately afterwards, the *Formidable* herself cracked in twain amid-ships, struck by a torpedo intended for the *Majestueuse* which had been lanced by a second-class torpedo boat, lowered in the dark by the *Mars*; while the *Mars* herself, having not yet relighted her lamps, was rammed at her central armours-belt by a second-class British cruiser, the *Charybdis*, the smaller ship shearing away with broken bows to go down by the head three miles away amid a crowd of allied cruisers.

Yonder to westward of the thickest region of battle, the *Amiral Baudin* (*c*), with a single twelve-inch shell, had annihilated both funnels of the *Kaiserhof*, while the *Kaiserhof*, before she could detect the *ruse* by which she was made to destroy her own flagship, had rattled the ribs of the *Amiral Baudin* with a rain of thousands of rounds of machine and quick-firing six and three-pounder shot, and had sent a barbette shell shrieking through her fore-armoured tube into the bowels of the French ship, where it ripped up her armoured deck, and in a nightmare of hellish fury, rent the whole central interior of the vessel into *débris*.

It was very shortly after this that even the ear-splitting din of that wide and various warfare received, as it were,



*The two bows met with a crash.*

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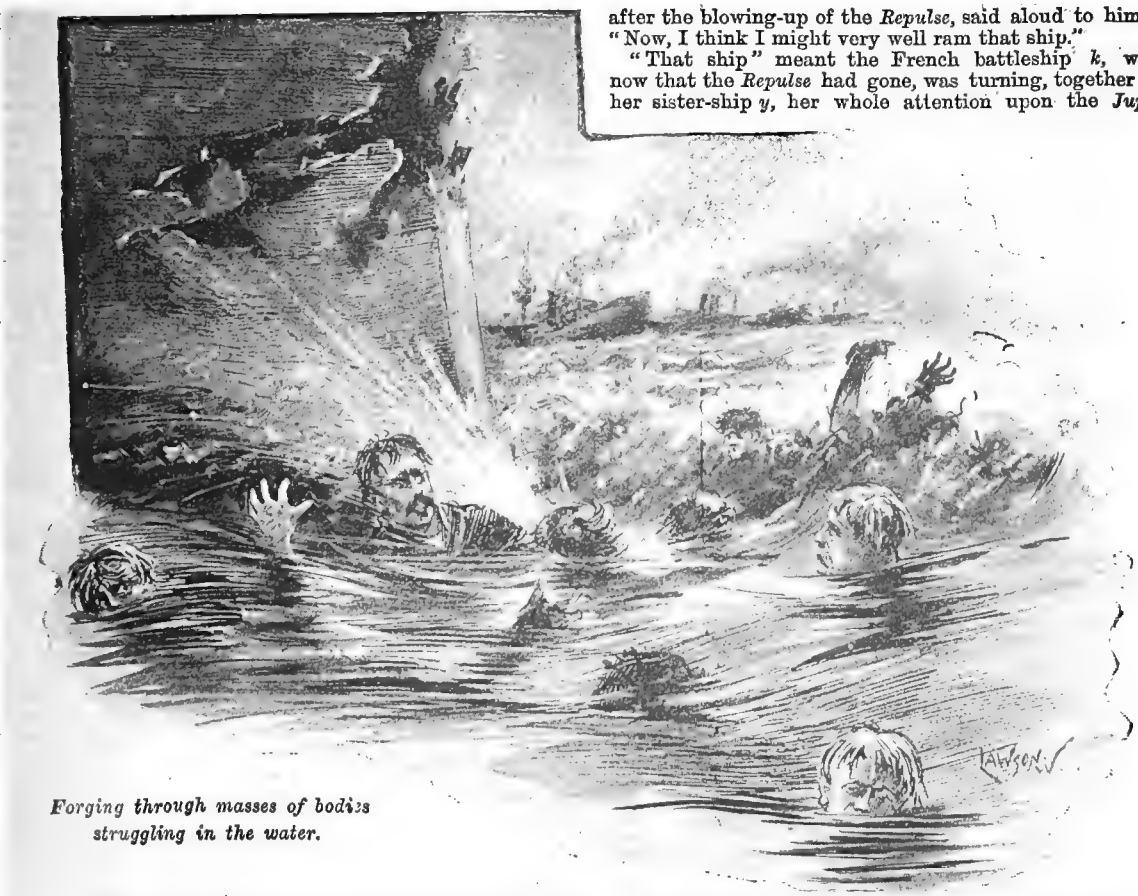

*Forging through masses of bodies struggling in the water.*

an added shock of horror, when a wide sheet of flame was seen to rise and ride in quivering glare toward the sky, and the next moment a bang of thunder where the *Repulse* had been shook the universal sea. A fire had run through her entire length between decks, and ignited at nearly the same moment every atom of explosive within her into one splendid detonation. She did not burst—she crumbled to fragments. At the same time, at the other end of that line of ships, the *Magnificent* was quietly going down by her poop, where a French submarine boat had affixed a Whitehead.

In a very few minutes after the actual commencement of hostilities, four of the seven British battleships had disappeared, and nine of the Allied fourteen.

Of the intricate and incalculable warfare that was darting about in furious wrath in every direction in the shape of the less massive armatures, little was sufficiently salient to be recorded.

The enemy was very preponderant in number, but deficient in weight of first-class cruisers. The mutual havoc went on rapidly with complex disaster and success. Ships about to disappear rose again, blown high by torpedoes; men on the point of going down in the wheeling suction of some great sinking vessel were arrested in their descent to be mangled by distracted shrapnel, or scalded by some flight of stinging steam; crafts were destroyed, and destroyed again, and ten times destroyed again, before they sank in scattered shreds. It was an anarchy and blindness of rage, which rent the already rent, and mutilated the already murdered.

The *Jupiter*, by some favour of her position, was still partially seaworthy, when Captain MacLeod, about a minute after the blowing-up of the *Repulse*, said aloud to himself, "Now, I think I might very well ram that ship."

"That ship" meant the French battleship *k*, which, now that the *Repulse* had gone, was turning, together with her sister-ship *y*, her whole attention upon the *Jupiter*. The *Jupiter's* fore-deck had already been ripped up, and one of her fore-barbette guns unshipped.

At once she went wheeling in a sixteen-point curve to starboard, pouring at the same time a broadside upon the enemy. But it was at once seen that the most delicate seamanship would now be required, for not only was the *Jupiter's* move detected, but the French ship *k* began to manœuvre to anticipate the attack by herself delivering the ram, and the chase was promptly joined by *j*, which had just succeeded in lodging a finishing shell in the *Victorious* (B).

All the three vessels, though one of them was sinking slowly, and all were more or less ruined, were intact in engines and funnels, and went careering in swift flight on evolutionary curves whose outcome only the nicest commanding skill could determine. To destroy a funnel of one or both—this was Captain MacLeod's hope. He started a rattle of quick-firing shot as the three vessels wheeled nearer. But there was a racket on board the *Jupiter*—a bursting shell—a clatter of broken plate—a stream of blood poured down John Hardy's face—Captain MacLeod fell limp and senseless at his feet.

At that moment from the conning-towers of *both* the French ships, there went forth the command: "Prepare to ram." The *Jupiter* was between them; and her captain was laid low.

But a born sailor was now in command of the *Jupiter*.

John Hardy coolly gave the order to slacken speed. With his eyes on both the hurrying, impending ships, he waited thirty, thirty-five seconds; and at the right fraction of a second, he gave the order: "Full steam ahead—quick!"

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Blood covered his face, and the breeze in his hair gave him rather a look of wildness and disarray; but his pulses beat with absolute steadiness.

As the poop of the *Jupiter* slipped elusively away from between the two advancing rams, there arose a fearful outcry from both the French ships. But it was too late. No celerity of hand, no power on earth, could now avert the awful catastrophe. The two bows met, and crashed.

One of the French ships leant to port, as if fainting in despair, then languidly sank.

Was he really in command? Captain MacLeod lay at his feet. Who knew? Would not his, John Hardy's, commands be obeyed tacitly, if he tacitly assumed the command? And *he*, at least, was under no orders from the Rear-Admiral. He ordered the helm to be put three points to starboard, and full speed ahead. The *Jupiter* went hasting at once directly northward.

John was running from the fight.

The first clear necessity seemed to him now to get out of the battle, while the *Jupiter's* engines were still intact.

He suspected, indeed, that she was already slowly sinking. But there was still hope. She went ploughing northward. Her position on the outskirts of the battle favoured him.

Of what particular crime was it that he was guilty? He knew well that it was a crime. Was it treason, or piracy, or mutiny, or felony? The place which he now occupied should have been filled by the Commander of the *Jupiter*, now that her Captain was senseless. John Hardy knew that; but then he remembered that her commander was under flag-orders. *He* was not.

Three miles to the north of her former position he turned the ship's bow from north to north-east; three more miles, and he turned it from north-east to east. Now he breathed freely; the *Jupiter* was well beyond effective range of the battling ships yonder.

Her lights had long since been again put out. On she went through the darkness, east by south now, battered and broken in her upper works, but tolerably sound below—and with funnels still whole! and with a ram ploughing through the water at twenty miles an hour! and absolutely safe now from shot!

John Hardy stood in her conning-tower with the wind in his light hair, and the blood on his face, and a slight frown on his brow. And on through the darkness drove the silent battleship.

In little more than half-an-hour she was upon that hollow square of troopers and liners, which were here just gently forging through the water till the conclusion of the fight. There were thirty-eight of them, and they contained over 120,000 men.

Suddenly, out of the darkness, the *Jupiter* pounced upon them.

Has the reader ever seen a thoroughbred, long-snouted rat-terrier, the prize-winner perhaps at a dog-show, let loose in a small room among a hundred hoarded rats? With a gleeful, sudden spring he is among them as they scamper into a huddled heap in one corner, seeking to hide from the very sight of their little, leering eyes that countenance of wrath. He, for his part, gives one, and only one, swift crack at the bones of the neck, and then disdainfully drops the limp vermin, to go on to the next.

It was something in this way that the *Jupiter* dealt with these thirty-eight troopships and liners. One after another they cracked like tea-pots, they snapped like rotten twigs, they sank at a touch. Hardy rammed one on one side of the square, and went straight on and rammed another opposite; but in the rapid passage from opposite to opposite, he had sunk five with barbette and broadsides of quick-firing guns. The *Jupiter* rushed about among them like a fury, dashing through a multitude of complex evolutionary curves, and heaping havoc all around. It was a scene of unparalleled carnage. In a short time the ram of the *Jupiter* was forging through masses of bodies struggling in the water; what was left of the four sides of the square was shooting forth flames; and the *Jupiter* herself was being now swept by tempests of bullets from the land forces still afloat. Without visible result, however. Three only of the transports, which were sufficiently uninjured by the time they could get under speed, escaped. The rest went down.

It was now a question with John Hardy whether he could save the *Jupiter* from sinking by beaching her. She was already low by the stern, and the coast was miles away. The moment his awful work was ended, he gave the order to turn her bow directly northward.

He only just failed.

A quarter of a mile out from Brighton, he bent over Captain MacLeod, looked close into his eyes, and put his hand over his heart. The heart beat, but a splinter had gashed all the chest.

"Sir, sir," said John, "can you not——"

He shook the Captain. A moan came from the prostrate man; his eyes opened.

"Try to understand," said John; "you will have to *swim*, or be lost. Can you understand?"

The Captain stared stupidly, but nodded, and John stripped him hurriedly, then himself.

The next moment he gave the order:

"Hands to leap overboard and make for shore!"

There was nothing resembling a boat any longer left on board the *Jupiter*.

In two minutes three hundred bluejackets were in the water, and the *Jupiter*, left alone, took in a cascade of sea over her poop.

A bluejacket on one side of Captain MacLeod, and John on the other, were making slow progress forward. Toward ten o'clock they felt bottom beneath their feet; they dragged themselves forward, and fell fainting on Brighton beach.

(*To be continued.*)


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### RESULT FOR LAST WEEK.

John E. Long, Inland Revenue, Watlington, Tetsworth. "Walker's Political Economy." 12s. 6d. Mr. J. Begrie, 172, Causewayside, Edinburgh. "Bible Dictionary." 3s. 6d. Mr. S. Cottle, Clandowns Broadway, near Bath. "Strength." By Sandow." 2s. 6d. Mis, Blanche Roels, 12, Castle Square, Swansea. "Thelma." By Marie Corelli. 6s. P. Geraght, 13, Hauteville, Guernsey. "Murray's Logic Inductive and Deductive." By W. Minto. 4s. 6d. Thomas Ainsworth, 10, Raglan Street, Barrow-in-Furness. "Rome." By Emile Zola. (In English). 4s.

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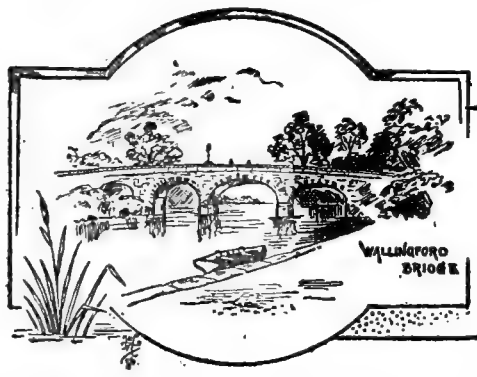


# Love's Stratagem.

"I'm afraid," she said reflectively, "it can't be done."

"But why?" I urged. "There are a hundred reasons why it should be done, and not a single one for the negative side."

She looked at me gravely from under the fringe of her long dark lashes, but made no further reply; then began rocking herself slowly to and fro in the hammock. Now I, who had known her all her sweet, short life, knew that was a certain sign of mental disturbance, for usually she was as calmly, placidly reposeful and self-possessed as it is possible for an up-to-date 19th century girl to be; and I determined to push my advantage.

"Now see here, Mollie," I said, "it is not the fact that he is my friend that makes me beset you in this way" (it was not, indeed, but I saw no reason just then to state my inner motive), "but look at the matter reasonably, from this point of view. Where could one find a better fellow than dear old Tom? Clever, jolly, good-looking, rich and absolutely devoted to you. Knowing all this, can you look me in the face and say you are not ashamed of the way you are treating him?"

She did not look me in the face; she did worse—she laughed.

I went on severely: "Mollie, I am surprised that a girl of your sense and capabilities should descend to the level you have" (Mollie, I am glad to say, here cast upon me one startled look; at last I had succeeded in rousing her) "to the level of an unprincipled coquette."

The little rogue, instead of being impressed by my eloquence, looked immensely relieved as I concluded; still she vouchsafed no reply.

"Now, won't you promise me to think seriously of it, my dear girl?" I said persuasively.

She sat bolt upright now and looked me squarely in the eye, and as I looked I quailed, for there I saw no sign of yielding, only firm determination, and I shuddered as I thought how much I had at stake.

"Jim," she said, "you entirely overlook my avowed principles," with an air as if there could be nothing further in the matter to discuss. I, however, thought differently.

"And do you so dignify your absurd fancies?" I inquired, adopting as a last hope my most sarcastic tone of superiority.

"My absurd fancies!" she echoed, the light of battle flaming up in her lovely eyes and a scorn of all mankind curving her Cupid's bow of a mouth. Even as I trembled before her gaze I thought to myself that I had never seen her look prettier.

"And that is what you men call the striving of woman after something higher, nobler, better than what has been; that is how you look upon us when you no longer find us pliant to your tyrannical will—when we feel we must use the gifts God gave us for the good of the world, and not settle down into a fireside nonentity; And yet you ask me to marry one of these very men. Never, I tell you, never!"

She had got in all the points beautifully, but I groaned mentally, and inwardly reviled myself for my stupid blunder; but the little witch was provoking. By fair means or foul I must mollify her. I must win her to do as I wished. So I answered penitently:

"Forgive me, Mollie, my words were ill-chosen, and far be it from me to speak slightingly of a noble effort to uplift humanity on the part of anyone." (Humanity be hanged! My thought was only of a small, but very precious part of it). "Yet let me ask you if it is beneath the dignity of a beautiful girl like yourself"—Mollie's dimples showed for one fleeting second, but the embryo smile was sternly suppressed—"to cheer, uplift, and help a man who needs you infinitely more than struggling humanity as a whole, and is pitifully at a loss without you."

"That does sound sensible," she admitted reflectively. "Why didn't you talk to me like that before?"

"It is what I meant all the time," I answered. It was a lucky inspiration, yet, Heaven help me, I could not scruple at trifles at this critical point. "Surely you did not think I wanted you to give up your" (high-flown notions had almost escaped me, but I managed to change it in time to) "life mission; only to select for it some worthy object."

"In the shape of Tom?" she inquired, laughing. "Well," here she leaned towards me confidentially, "I don't mind telling you, Jim, for you've known me always, that I am rather fond of Tom, and I would be half inclined to give him what he wants if it were not for Kate. You know all about our plans together—how five of our class pledged ourselves, after we had graduated, to be true to our higher selves, to let nothing interfere with the faithful performance of our mission, and matrimony especially was not to be thought of till some real work was *un fait accompli*. Two of our little circle have basely gone over to the enemy, and poor Louise is dead, so that Kate and I are the only ones left. I'm terribly afraid I am not quite so much in earnest as I have been, but Kate is. Why, only yesterday she was speaking so seriously of all we must do and be to uphold our ideas. I simply do not dare to give up."

My heart was beating with a most joyous hope long before she had finished, but I traitorously hid it under a solemn countenance, and only said:

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"But, Mollie, can you not explain to Kate's perfect satisfaction that your mission is making Tom so thoroughly happy and contented in his own home, and in so inspiring him by your sweet presence that he will put that bright mind of his to better work than devising means of winning you, as he has hitherto done, and so, in this way, do your work for humanity by proxy?"

"How well you put it, Jim, and how logical it sounds: And—yes, I'll just do it."

As she announced to me this altogether desirable news she settled herself once more comfortably in her hammock, only to jump up hastily the next moment and demand curiously:

"But why under the sun do you take such an immense amount of interest in the matter?"

I had been expecting this question, and was somewhat prepared, so I answered slowly:

"I suppose I'd better make a clean breast of it. You see, Kate felt much the same as you did, and I simply had to get you to give in before I see her to-night, for, as things have turned out now—well, we are to be married in June."

Reginald Horsley.

# THE STORM—AND AFTER.

## A PRAIRIE IDYL.

The prairies were growing dark. The moon had not risen, and the twilight had withdrawn till in the far west it stretched along the horizon a mere saffron glow. Off to the north lay a dense blackness. Few stars were visible. The night was sultry. It would rain before morning.

So thought Rack Todd, as he rose from his milking stool, and felt the darkness press down upon him. His thoughts had absorbed him, and he had not done the work well. The cows were all going dry. He knew from its weight that the pail in his hand was not half full.

"Even the dumb beasts go back on me!" he muttered, and thought bitterly of his blighted crops, his garden rank with weeds, his home bereft.

Had he been told that all this was due to a lack of the vigorous labour and sound judgment which in former years had made his fields and herds yield swiftly and abundantly, he would have answered truly that he had worked harder than now—toiling in the field from early morning till long after the sun had sunk. Alas, the corn had fallen with the weeds that day, while he had been staring straight ahead, trying to think of nothing, but only succeeding in going over and over his plots for bitter retribution.

The cows were but showing the effect of unskilful milkings. Rosie moved away as though she resented it. With a sudden spasm of rage, he flung the milk over her.

"Durn ye!" he roared, "a half loaf *ain't* better'n no bread! If I can't have all, I won't have none!"

"Daddy, daddy, I wants my milk!"

"All right!" groaned Rack. "Shet up! I'm gettin' your milk."

But she was not to be appeased. He had startled her from her nestling dreams by a fence-post, and covered with the soft moisture of slumber, the night struck her chill. She commenced crying in a whining, exasperating fashion, and he saw the faint glow of her light dress approaching. She held up her little tin cup saying over and over again: "I wants my milk! Daddy, I wants my milk!" ending in a wail.

Rack picked her up and shook her.

"Shet up, I tell ye! I'm a-gettin' your milk. Stop that hollerin', now nobody's hurtin' ye. There, there! Daddy never meant to! Ye ain't skeered of Daddy, air ye? Be a good girl, now, an' he'll get your milk right off."

"I wants my milk!" she wailed.

Rack put her down despairingly, and went to another cow. There were times when that sweet, whining baby voice threatened his reason.

The child pattered along till she found a steer drowsing comfortably over his cud. She hit him sharply on the back with her little tin cud. "Det up!" she commanded, and when he arose, she cuddled down in the warm place. She was a wise young woman, so far as her opportunites went, and not unlike her mother. She did not sleep again, but lay close, crooning something that was half wail, half song.

Rack found her there, and filled her cup again and again. She was very hungry. When she had finished, he put her over the fence and faced her towards the house.

"Get on Daddy's bed, and he'll undress ye when he comes in. Don't ye go and be skeered. There ain't nothin' to touch ye."

It was quite dark now; he could barely follow the gleam of her dress, but her sleepy, crooning voice came back to him.

"Heavens! whatever am I goin' to do!" he groaned, as he went back to his milking. A puff of air passed him. It would rain before midnight.

Soon the moon rose and battled with the angry clouds which slowly rolled about her. Since that one premonitory puff of air they had come on apace, sending no second warning. Now they covered all the heavens, save in that low corner in the East where the moon still held her own. Of the force which drove them, naught was heard or felt. Only where the East revealed it could the slow boiling and churning of their advance be seen. All else was tense with stillness. The storm might yet be an hour—half-hour distant.

Rack roused himself. He did not know how long he had sat there, his head bent forward, his hands idle.

"Thar's more wind than rain in them clouds—jest

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to spite me!" he said bitterly, thinking of his thirsty crops.

He had been late that spring with the planting, and his corn was in poor condition to stand the summer drought. Yet though he complained, it was to him of little moment whether the corn lived or died. His interest in it was purely fictitious, assumed because of the opportunity it gave him to voice his grudge against fate.

Yet in the past he had been a careful husbandman. To plant and reap, and play his small domestic part, had been the sum of his desires. To this end he had slaved and hoarded till the farm was his own. To this end his rustic wooing had prospered, and he had married "the prettiest girl on the Kaw."

His satisfaction had been complete. He had not dreamed that the vanities and frailties of his kind could touch him. He hardly knew that such things were, till he suddenly found himself chief actor in a tragedy, a *rôle* for which he was but poorly fitted. His impulse had been that of a savage—to strike out, to tear, to crush. But each effort, returning upon himself, numbed him with the knowledge of his own impotency, and he fell to reviling the weather, the crops, the door against which he stumbled, in fact, everything. For the woman who had forsaken him he had only a large contempt that forbade her all part in his scheme for vengeance.

"Such a useless, triflin' critter," as she had proved herself to be! He did not want to see or hear of her again. But for him.

"O Lord, give me my chance! give me my chance!" he cried.

His prayer brought him to his feet. With a cry he started backward, for *she* stood so close beside him that he had almost touched her.

The moonlight rested on her, and showed her tall and slim, yet lowly, as she bent before him.

"Get out o' this yard! Get off o' my place!" he panted.

"O, Rack, I ain't got nowhere to go!"

Her voice held the same sweet, irresponsible, complaining note as did the voice of the child. For the moment it strangled him, and his hand clutched his throat.

"Don't ye try to come that game on me! Don't ye!" he threatened. "Why don't ye go back?"

Then he saw that she was sobbing. A snarl of laughter tore his lips.

"He ain't got tired of ye *already*, has he? I'm a dummy, a greenhorn, a hayseed! He was more your kind. Told ye to go home to the ole man, an' your leetle girl, an' if she wa'n't dead yet fur want of a mother's care, to do your duty by her! Set her a good example. Whar's all the fine things he promised you?"

The moonbeams fell pitilessly upon her, revealing all her want and woe.

"You're a pretty picture! Get out o' my sight afore I kill ye."

Yet when he realised that she was going, he sprang after her: "Whar is he?"

"He's dead."

Her sobbing commenced afresh.

"I ain't eat nothin' to-day, an' I've come afar!" she wailed.

It was as if the woman had struck him, and he could not strike back. Ah, it was hard to be thus early cut off from every hope of the vengeance for which he had spent sleepless nights and fevered days, for which he had neglected his crops, for which the cows had gone dry! He did not want the interference of Death. How many times he had said that "killin' was too good for him!"

And now he was beyond the reach even of that!

"I'm hungry and I've come far!"

"Ye can't get nothin' hyar! Ye can't knock my plans on the head in that way. I'm a greenhorn, but I ain't quite so green as that!"

She leant against the fence and cried softly. She looked frail and weak. Rack stalked away. Then he whirled round.

"Thar's cold potatoes an' milk in the safe. Ye can help yeself."

When he reached the house, she was close behind him. The moon gave way then, and the clouds close over.

Rack paid no more attention to her. She hesitated a moment on the threshold while he struck a light, but seeing that he did not—would not—notice her that she had received all the invitation she was likely to get, she went timidly to the safe and opened it. Then she forgot everything, and ate ravenously.

Rack watched her furtively. She had been a dainty eater. Somehow this rapid, indiscriminate eating went farther than penitence towards atoning for her sin.

And in the yellow lamplight how pitiful a figure! Her dress was torn to tatters; her shoes were worn through; her hair was all dishevelled, an ugly scar, already healed, branded her forehead; there were hollows in her face where once there had been curves. Soiled lines streaked her cheeks, for she had wept many times that day. And in spite of all, she was a pretty woman. Almost was her beauty sufficient excuse for her being.

She noticed after a time that Rack was undressing the baby. How awkward, how helpless he was. The child was asleep, and lay, pink and moist, a dead weight on his lap. Its head and arms slipped and fell limply, yet how tender his touch. With a fawning motion, the wife crept to him.

"Let me do it," she said.

"If ye've et all ye want, ye'd better be movin'. There's going to be a storm."

"O, Rack, let me touch her. I jest wan' to tech her an' I'll go willin'."

"Naw. I don't want no foolishness. It's time fer ye to go. Ye can't stay hyar."

She went meekly. That was one of her virtues—meekness.

The storm was fast approaching. Gusts of wind shook the house, and were followed by ominous silence. Through the open door Rack saw the clouds lurid with dun and amber, whirling forward. The air was full of an electric glow, though there had been no flash.

Against that ghastly splendour, her physical form towered as black and tragic as her spiritual one. The clouds surged downward to embrace, engulf her. Another step, and she would be as one with them.

He forgot aught but the perilous moment. "Come back! Come!" he shouted, springing after her. With one hand he pulled her in, and with the other closed the door, against which, in another moment, the storm hurled itself.

The wind lulled towards morning. Rack, huddled against the window, listened to the regular breathing of the child and its mother. From without came the crackling of the young, growing corn, and he knew there would be harvest, and planting, and harvest again, for the rain fell steadily, plenteously.

B. Bridgman.

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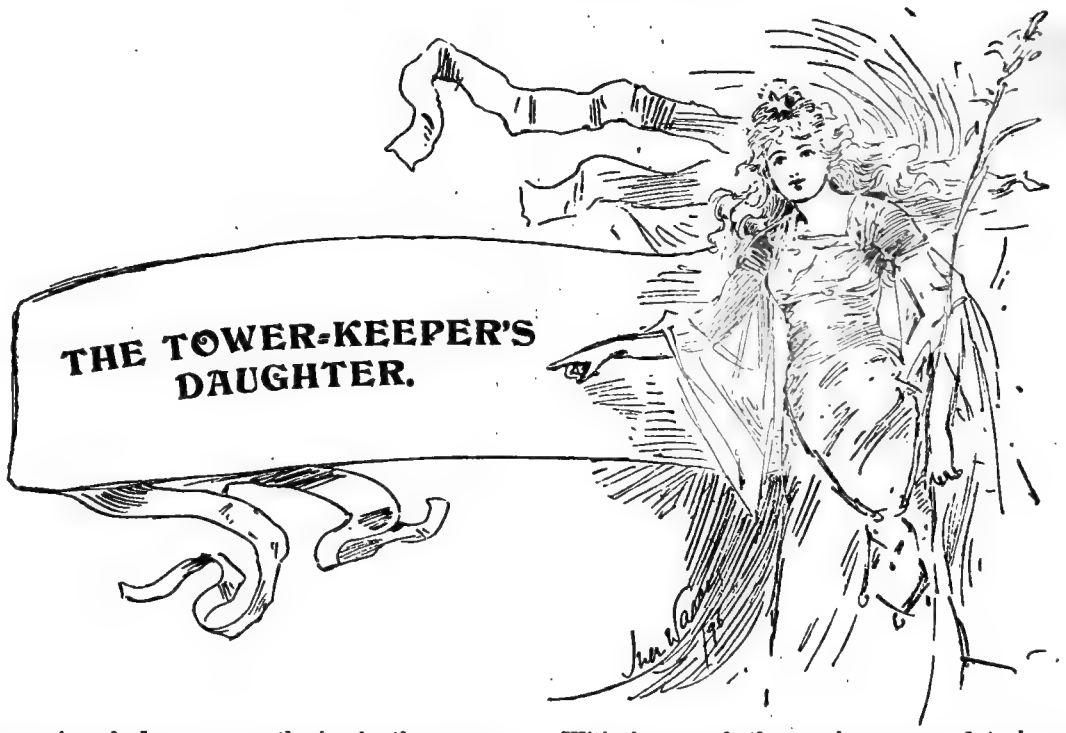

# THE TOWER-KEEPER'S DAUGHTER.

The evening shadows were gathering in the narrow streets of a small town near Schaffhausen, when a young man, dressed as a peasant, and bearing the traces of travel and exposure upon him, limped wearily into one of the taverns in a side street. His right arm was in a roughly improvised sling, and his whole appearance was that of a man who was suffering both in mind and body.

He ordered some food and shrank back into the darkest corner of the smoky parlour, without taking any notice of the two or three other men who were drinking and smoking round the hearth.

The inn-keeper's daughter, a bright, healthy girl of eighteen, soon brought the simple meal he had asked for, and setting a candle on the table before him, stood prepared to see him enjoy it.

"Take that away," he said, pointing to the light. "It hurts my eyes, I've been ill."

Instead of obeying this peremptory command she lifted the candle so as to be better able to see the face of her guest, and, after a careful examination, she said saucily:

"Your face doesn't match your clothes. Unless I'm very much mistaken, you're no peasant."

Her delicate flattery was quite lost upon him, and without more ado he jumped up and blew out the offending light. The girl turned away laughing merrily, and the surly stranger continued his supper.

A few moments later he noticed that the men at the other end of the room were taking an evident interest in him and that one of them was talking to the girl in a low tone, accompanied by looks and gestures that certainly pointed to his being the subject of the conversation. Then he caught the words:

"Rather suspicious, eh? Perhaps he's one of the insurgents, and if so we might make a nice little sum by handing him over to the authorities."

With these words the speaker rose and took a step towards the young man, who instantly sprang to his feet and made a dash for the door. Before the others had recovered from their surprise he had disappeared in the darkness, and only the sound of his retreating footsteps gave them any clue as to the way he had gone.

A hue-and-cry was raised, and in an incredibly short time a crowd of men, women, and children were chasing wildly through the usually quiet streets, some carrying torches, others brandishing the first weapon they could lay their hands on, and all shouting at the tops of their voices.

Meanwhile, the victim was hurrying down a narrow alley under cover of a high wall, and his strength was fast failing him.

He paused an instant to gain breath, and as he did so, a dark form came towards him, and a hand was laid on his arm.

"Are you an insurgent? Are they after you?" asked a woman's voice quickly.

"Let me go!" he muttered, and twisted himself from her grasp. But she was not to be daunted, and seizing him firmly again, she whispered:

"Come with me, I can save you."

He felt himself drawn on a few paces, and through a low door in the wall into a quiet grass-grown inclosure. They were only just in time, for as the heavy little door closed behind him, locking itself as it did so, he heard the trampling of feet, and the discord of many voices as his pursuers turned into the lane he had just left. One or two of them tried the door, behind which crouched the young man and his unknown deliverer, but it resisted their efforts, and they passed on. One man said as he did so:

"The gate is fast, and the wall's too high to climb, so he can't have got in there; but I could have sworn he came this way."

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When the sound of voices had died away the girl rose to her feet, and, taking her companion by the hand, said:

"I dare not light my lantern, but I can lead you to a safe place for the present. Come; we have no time to lose."

He went with her, feeling dazed and bewildered, with hardly strength to realise the sudden change in his position. They crossed the grass, and reached another door which stood at the base of a tall, massive building, which loomed far above them in the semi-darkness. Then they mounted a winding stone staircase, the girl going before, and the man painfully making the ascent some little distance behind her. At last they reached the top, and he saw the light shine out from an open door, and the figure of an old man stand out against it.

"Well, Linda, I was wondering what had kept you," said a kindly voice.

"Yes, father, I know I'm late; but I'll tell you all about it when you've let us in and shut the door behind us," she answered mysteriously.

Half-an-hour later, the three were sitting round the supper-table in the quaint octagon room that had been the home of Hans Toralt and his daughter Gerlind ever since the latter had seen the light of day. The old man was custodian of the ancient belfry, and, having lost his wife soon after their child's birth, he had preferred to live on in the eyrie-like dwelling to which he had brought his bride. The stranger, now rested and refreshed, explained to his deliverers how he came to be in such a plight. It was the summer of 1849, when Germany was rent by civil factions, and a fierce struggle for political reforms was going on. Alban Hartland, a student and a patriot, had embraced the cause of independence; and, taking up the sword instead of the pen, had been left for dead on the field after one of the engagements, which terminated disastrously for his cause.

Through the kindness of the peasants in the Black Forest, he had been nursed back to something like health, and enabled to make his way without detection thus far in the direction of the Swiss frontier. The events which led to his meeting with Gerlind were soon told, and he threw himself upon the mercy of his host.

"Though I am too old to take an active part in the contest," said Toralt, "my whole sympathies go with you, and I am proud to think my little girl should have been of service to one who has been wounded in the cause of freedom."

"The little girl" was in reality a tall, fair damsel of seventeen, with a fresh, young face, and merry, honest blue eyes, which looked with no common admiration at the hero she had befriended.

It was decided that Hartland should be allowed a few hours sleep, and then be concealed till the search should be over, and they could mature plans for getting him across the frontier.

Toralt looked out of the window before going to bed, and saw that there were guards bearing torches stationed at intervals round the church below, and he felt sure that in the morning his premises would be subjected to examination. The government had set a price on the heads of the insurgents, and the strictest watch was being kept upon all the frontiers to prevent the escape of the rebels. It was a dangerous position, both for the fugitive and his benefactors, but the old man was resolved to risk all, if needs be, for the safety of his guest.

After a few hours of restful sleep Alban was awakened by Gerlind's voice telling him it was four o'clock, and time to get up.

He had thrown himself down the previous night just as he was, too crippled and exhausted to remove his clothes; so, with a feeble attempt to rearrange his disordered garments, he was soon ready for the simple, but tempting breakfast which he found waiting for him. When and where Gerlind herself had slept was a mystery to him, for she had given up her own room to him, and the accommodation in the tower was distinctly limited. The girl only laughed when he asked how she had fared, and bade him waste no time, but eat all he could, as it was doubtful when he would get anything more.

"Now, follow me," she said, when she thought he had done sufficient justice to the repast. "Father is waiting for you."

She drew back a panel which disclosed a steep spiral staircase, and began to mount it with all the assurance of long familiarity. At the top stood Toralt with a light in his hand, and Alban found himself among the cobwebs and ghostly shadows of the belfry itself. The great, deep-voiced bells hung from massive beams beneath him, and the faint rays of the growing dawn struggled through the narrow slits in the masonry, revealing the dark abyss which seemed ready to engulf them.

The old man led the way across one of the beams, carrying with him a short ladder.

At first Alban hesitated to trust himself on such a perilous path, but the sight of Gerlind walking over an even narrower beam shamed him, and as he started off, rather uncertainly it is true, she shouted out kind, encouraging injunctions to him to walk as if he were in the middle of the road and then he would be all right.

They reached the other side safely, and then Toralt pointed to a dark recess above their heads, against which he had placed the ladder, saying:

"There is just room enough for a man there, but you must curl your legs up and not make a sound when they come to look for you, as I know they will. As soon as it is safe I will fetch you down and get a doctor to dress your wound."

With some difficulty Alban Hartland did as he was told, and if his heart sank when the ladder was withdrawn, his spirits were soon revived by Gerlind's cheery promise to come and see him as soon as she dare. With a smile, she raised the light and took a last look at him in his dusky hiding-place before following her father down to their rooms.

For some time he sat there, thinking over the chain of events that had led him into this situation, and through all the scenes of the past few months, the blue eyes of his latest benefactress seemed to drive into the back-ground even the high aims of his patriotic dreams. After vainly endeavouring to chase away this sentimental fancy, of which he was half ashamed in his own mind, for hitherto his life had been devoted to the pursuit of learning rather than that of pleasure, and the frolics of his fellow students had possessed no attraction for him, an ominous sound from the tower below brought back the sense of danger and fear of discovery.

Men's voices and the rattling of swords were distinctly audible to his keen ear, and in a few moments he heard heavy steps ascending the staircase leading to the belfry. He dare not look, he dare hardly breathe; but he heard them say as they reached the top:

"Well, he doesn't seem to be here, unless he's hang-

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ing on inside one of the bells, and he won't stop there long."

"Perhaps there's a hole on the other side there," said another voice, "shall I go over and see?"

Hartland nearly bit his lips through to prevent his teeth from chattering as he heard this suggestion, but to his infinite relief the prompt answer came:

"No, man, what *are* you thinking of? If you want to put an end to yourself, kindly do it when you're off duty."

They went down grumbling at the disappearance of the man who had so mysteriously escaped from their grasp, and in a few minutes all was quiet again.

In the middle of the day Hartland had a long visit from Gerlind, who brought him some food tied to the end of a pole which she put up within his reach, and while he ate his dinner she sat on the beam and chatted to him as if she had known him all her life. He told her of his own lonely life, that he was an orphan without brothers or sisters, and how he should have to live in exile probably for the rest of his life. Her voice softened, and he fancied there must be tears in her eyes as she tried to comfort him, and asked how his arm had been hurt and whether he was suffering much pain.

"There is a bullet in it, and if I lose the use of my right arm my whole career will be spoilt, unless I can learn to write with my left hand," he answered sadly.

He then went on to tell her of his ambition to become a great writer and, if possible, to effect with his pen what he had failed to further with his sword.

That evening, when he had been released from his hiding-place, Toralt fetched a doctor whom he knew to be friendly to the patriotic cause, and he examined the wound.

He pronounced it to be the work of a spent bullet, which had not penetrated far and could easily be extracted.

Dr. Reichardt was a brisk, practical little man, and while Gerlind was getting the necessary things for the operation he was discussing with the two men plans for Hartland's escape from the town, promising to lend what assistance he could in the matter.

The ball was soon extracted, and Gerlind proved a very capable nurse in the matter of holding and bathing the injured arm, and her sympathetic touch seemed to lessen the pain by awakening counter sensations in the region of the patient's heart.

"Let me see the cause of my misery," said Alban as she was clearing away the traces of the operation.

Gerlind made him no answer, and when he repeated his request she said carelessly:

"Oh, I should think you have had enough of that horrid thing," and passed out of the room without another word.

That evening it was arranged that Hartland should be dressed up as a peasant woman in some of the late Frau Toralt's clothes, happily she had been a tall woman, and on the following night he was to go with Gerlind to the frontier under pretence of carrying a basket of clean linen to the next village.

They had a good laugh over the vain attempts Hartland made to fathom the mysteries of female attire, and more than once Gerlind had to come to the rescue to save her mother's garments from being torn to shreds in his struggles. Some alterations were found to be necessary, so Gerlind set herself to work the next morning to make the dress look presentable. They were chatting pleasantly together, for the old man had gone out to make arrangements for their meeting the doctor that night, when the girl's quick ear caught the sound of footsteps coming up the tower steps.

With one bound she opened the bedroom door, motioned Hartland into the tiny room, and locked him in just as a knock was heard outside. She went and held a whispered conversation with the visitor, who seemed somewhat unwilling to go, till at last Alban heard her say:

"If you want me to go out with you to-morrow, you must let me do my sewing to-day, or I shall have nothing to wear."

This fearful threat appeared to take effect and the visitor departed. Hartland knew it was a man, and the words he had heard sent a chill through his heart. He looked keenly at the girl's flushed face as she came to let him out.

"That was a narrow shave," she panted.

"Why, who was it?"

"Oh, one of the guards—a very old friend of ours," she added with a touch of embarrassment. "I knew he would stay till father came back if I let him in, and he might have heard you."

A look of wistful fear passed over her face as she said this, and Alban was at a loss whether to connect her change of manner with anxiety for himself or annoyance with the would-be intruder. Seeing that she did not seem inclined to talk he offered to read aloud, and looked through her small stock of books, full of wonder and pity at the mental starvation in which she must have been brought up. At last he selected a volume of poems and began reading. They were not such as to appeal to him, being of the sentimental kind affected by young girls and love-lorn spinsters, but he read well, and when he paused to look at his listener he felt sorry he had put so much expression into his voice.

Gerlind had dropped her work and was looking out of the window at the distant snow-clad mountains with all her young soul in her eyes. It was the look of a bird that has just learnt the use of its wings and finds the bars of a cage interposed between it and the freedom it craves.

He turned over the pages and looked for something more cheerful, but as he read on, the disquieting thought forced itself upon him that he would not leave this bright, sunny girl as happy as he had found her. Was it only pity in her heart for him, or had he unwittingly aroused some deeper feeling? He could not take her with him even if he wished to do so, and he was not at all sure that his gratitude carried him so far as to contemplate an alliance with an uneducated girl. It was with a sense of relief that he heard her father's voice calling to her from without.

The night was dark and stormy, rain fell at intervals, and the wind raged round the old tower more like an autumn gale than a summer storm. All was ready for Alban's departure, and he was saying a few last words to his host when the latter remarked:

"I'm sorry we could not keep you longer, but we dare not, for to-morrow is a holiday, and Gerlind's future husband always spends it with us. He is in the guards, and is one of those who was looking for you that night. We have known him a long time, and he's very fond of my Linda, so I want to see them married before I die."

Now the whole thing was clear to Hartland's mind. This explained Gerlind's agitation in the morning, and also threw a painful light on the passionate yearning in her eyes after he had read the love poem to her. She did not love this man, he felt sure, and yet his lips were

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sealed, he could not speak to her now; as with the contrariness of human nature he felt he should like to do.

He took leave of the old man and started off with Gerlind carrying the basket between them. They went through the principal street to avoid exciting suspicion, and passed on till they came within sight of the low wooden house that stood at the toll-gate.

"We'll wait here for the doctor," said Gerlind quietly, and her voice sounded strained and unlike her usual merry tone. They had not spoken to each other, except when necessary, since they had left the tower. In fact neither had the heart for it, and Alban had his face muffled up in a scarf.

The officer in charge of the gate wished them good-night, and invited Gerlind to come in and rest, but she refused, saying they were only waiting for her cousin to take breath before they went on again.

To her intense relief the doctor drove up at that minute and thus diverted the man's attention from them.

"Good evening, doctor, you've a nasty night for your drive."

"Yes, Herr Inspecktor, I have, and I'm in a hurry. A bad case is waiting for me."

The gate was thrown open, and Gerlind, making a sign to Alban, prepared to pass through beside the carriage; but the man stopped them and again asked their business. While she was explaining that her cousin had the toothache and was in a hurry to get home, the doctor, who had fixed a thorn on the end of his whip, touched up his horse, and the animal began plunging violently. The inspector went to the horse's head and tried to quiet him; but he only kicked and struggled more than ever, so that both life and property seemed in danger. Under cover of this exciting episode, Alban and Gerlind were able to pass the boundary unnoticed by the breathless official.

"Now you're safe," panted Gerlind when they had run some distance, "and I must go," she added, with a little sigh.

She helped him out of his dress, and took the silk handkerchief he had worn round his neck with her; the rest she threw over a hedge.

"Good-bye," she added quickly; "you'll find shelter in the village," and before he had time to answer she was gone.

She next moment she was at his side again, and he felt her arms clasped round his neck and her lips pressed to his own. He tried to hold her in his arms; but she was too quick for him, and this time she did not return.

After this Fortune favoured Alban Hartland. He made many friends during his exile, and was able to prosecute his studies under most advantageous circumstances; but he never forgot Gerlind, and when, a few years later, he was permitted to return to his own country, the first place he visited was the old frontier town.

He went to the church and heard from the new custodian that both Toralt and his daughter were dead. They showed him her grave, and from its simple inscription he learnt that she had only lived a year after that memorable night, and that she died unmarried.

He sought out the old woman who had nursed her, and found her very willing to talk about her foster-child:

"Ah, poor Gerlind! She was never strong, and one night she got wet through and was never the same again. It was consumption, like her mother. And the poor child's mind was quite queer before she died. She made me promise to bury her near the little gate, and to put a book of verses and a leaden bullet in her coffin. She never let those two things out of her hands for months before she died. Her old father just broke his heart after her. Poor Linda! She was like my own child."

Mary Fermor.

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# THE MAN WHO LENT HIS CAMERA.

John Jonas Wilkinson is a respectable citizen. He has a charming home, a lovable wife, and the cleverest and best baby in town. He has put aside forever all dissipations of his bachelor days—the friendly drink, the other drink, and the eventual cab ride when the frost is beginning to appear on the pavements in the early morning light. He has but one fault, and that one came near his undoing a short time ago. He contracted the Kodak habit, and was unable to break himself of it. Shortly after marriage Wilkinson took his wife to visit a friend who was an enthusiastic amateur photographer. The friend Thomas has four Kodaks, and his bathroom had been converted into a dark room for developing films and plates. His mantelpieces and tables were decorated with Kodak pictures of himself and wife and his baby, his friends and his dog, his house and his bicycles, and other things that Wilkinson never dreamt could be learnt, and before the evening was over he

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took Wilkinson over into the dark room and initiated him into the mysteries of developing a Kodak film.

That settled it with Wilkinson. On the way home he confided to his wife that he intended getting a Kodak and seeing what he could do with it. Two days later he had a big Kodak in the parlour and was striving to make a snap shot of the squirming baby. The fever raged violently as the weeks rolled on, and he began to get results from the experiment. He, too, rigged up a dark room and tried to develop films, but he did not get the go of the thing just right, and was obliged to send most of his work to a city photographer to be finished. The expense was considerable, but when the house began to blossom with pictures that he had taken himself, Wilkinson felt amply repaid. Wilkinson has a friend, a worldly young man, who has thus far escaped the matrimonial meshes, and therefore travels the pace a trifle faster than that of the respectable Wilkinson.

Wilkinson always liked Burrows, though, and has been inclined to condone his numerous offences and escapades for the memory of the good times they once had together. He looks with a mildly reproving eye upon the company Burrows keeps, and never tells his wife about it, but he likes his old chum as well as ever. Two weeks ago Burrows dropped into Wilkinson's office, and, after a chat, observed that he would like to borrow a camera.

"There's a few of us going to have a little luncheon," said Burrows. "Some of the best fellows you ever knew, John, and they are going to bring the girls along, you know, and I thought it would be a good scheme to take a few snap shots at the table and that sort of thing, you know just as a memento."

"Still at the same old game are you?" said Wilkinson laughingly. "Burrows, you ought to settle down, you know, and drop that sort of thing. Really, my boy, you are getting along in years and you ought to be settled in life."

"Never mind that now—let me have the camera," said Burrows. "I'll settle down as soon as I am able to settle up."

"All right," said Wilkinson, "there it is. When you get through I will have the pictures developed for you."

That was how the thing started. Two days later Burrows sent the camera over by a messenger boy, and Wilkinson took it home that night, when it was laid away and forgotten for awhile. One bright Sunday morning Wilkinson had nothing in particular to do and chanced to observe a picturesque pose of the baby.

"That would make a grand picture," he whispered to his wife. "See if you keep him that way while I get the camera."

In a minute or two he had the black box levelled at the baby and had pressed the button. Mrs. Wilkinson changed the pose slightly and adjusted things so she could be in the picture, and again the shutter flashed and there was another photograph in the box. Two more followed, and then the roll was exhausted, and Wilkinson turned to a Sunday paper.

The next day, on his way to business, he stopped at the office of the photographer who did his developing work, and left the roll with the orders that four reprints be made of everything that came out well in development, and for weeks he thought nothing more of it. Then came his Waterloo.

One fatal morning when he was in a hurry to get away, his wife asked about the baby's portraits that he had taken.

"Oh, yes, I had forgotten them," he said. "They must be finished by this time. Suppose you drop in while you are shopping to-day and get them. Have them charged to me."

That afternoon Mrs. Wilkinson hurried into the establishment of the photographer and asked for the photographs.

"Ah, that roll Mr. Wilkinson left. Here it is—some good results too."

He had proceeded thus far with his compliments of the amateur's skill when a shriek from Mrs. Wilkinson startled him. She was holding at arm's length a photograph of a girl leaning on the back of the chair, with a cigarette on her smiling lips.

"This is not my husband's roll, is it?" she demanded.

"Oh yes, ma'am! there can be no mistake," said the photographer in alarm. "See, here is the name Wilkinson on the envelope. There were just twelve pictures, and they are all here."

Mrs. Wilkinson's eyes flashed as she picked up the portrait of another girl holding aloft a glass of champagne and sitting before a well-stocked table. There were other pictures of strange young men with their arms round the willing necks of strange young women, and in amongst them were the innocent little pictures of the baby on the floor of the Wilkinsons' home.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" asked the photographer, with much concern.

"Oh, no—nothing at all," said Mrs Wilkinson, with icy calmness, and a queer pretence at a laugh. "I'll just take these, and you may charge them to my husband."

When John Jonas Wilkinson reached home that evening and walked briskly in, he found his wife sitting on a trunk in the parlour. Near her was a packed handbag. She was pale and calm.

"What on earth is the matter?" he asked, gazing at these preparations for a journey. "Is your mother ill?"

"Mr. Wilkinson," said his wife, in firm, hard tones, "I am about to leave your house for ever. Before I go, I wish to tell you why I am going, and what I think of you. I would not run away while you were absent. I wish to let you know all about it."

While this astounding speech was being made, Wilkinson fell back against the door and feebly gasped for breath. His first thought was that his poor wife had gone mad.

"What on earth are you talking about?" he demanded.

"You know all about it," said Mrs. Wilkinson, "you and your wine-bibbing, cigarette-smoking friends! I don't care to discuss that question, but I wanted to inform you that I am going to my mother, and I am going to take baby. Any personal letters which come to me I trust you will be gentleman enough to forward, although I am beginning to doubt whether you have a spark of manliness left in you."

That almost finished Wilkinson. He gasped a few times and finally induced his indignant wife to explain. She showed him the Kodak pictures with a weary smile, observing that they admitted of no argument, they spoke for themselves.

And before he could induce her to unpack her trunk and handbag he was obliged to telegraph for Burrows and have that hopeless rake come to the house and swear to everything about the borrowed Kodak, the wine supper and entire innocence of Wilkinson. Now there is light in the dark room. James Unit.

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# THE GOLD MAGNET.

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

*Author of "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.*

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### An Interlude at Home.

About four months had passed since, as everyone concerned in the action off Samana Bay firmly believed, the *Minnehaha*, with all the marvellous possibilities that she had carried, had sunk in fragments to the bottom of the Atlantic. The *Pocahontas* had reached Kingston in a somewhat battered condition as to her masts, funnels, and upper works and with six dead and fourteen wounded on board of her. Two of her lighter guns, and three of her machine-guns were put out of action and three of her boats had been torn to splinters by the accurate fire of the dynamite guns, but happily her hull and her splendid engines were intact and, but for some bad rents in her funnels, her steaming power was as good as ever.

From Jamaica, after she had been refitted as far as possible, she steamed to the Cay on which the first scene of this narrative opened, and there, after a thorough search, aided by the chart which Tristam had obtained from Arthur Pendril, the old Spanish treasure ship was located and dug out. The treasure proved to be even more valuable than was anticipated. It consisted mainly of gold bars and a considerable quantity of ancient gold vessels and ornaments of unmistakable Inca origin, and nearly four pounds weight of magnificent emeralds, rubies, sapphires, turquoises and diamonds, some roughly cut and polished, but the majority of them as they came from the mine. Altogether the *Pocahontas*, including her cargo, was worth nearly four hundred thousand pounds more when she steamed away from the little island than she had been when she first sighted it.

The British Government, in consideration of the great service which, as was believed, had been performed in ridding the seas of the formidable *Minnehaha*, waived such claim as it might have had on the treasure-trove, and a considerable portion of the gold ware was equally divided between the British Museum and the United States Archæological Museum at Washington. The wounded men and the families of those who had been killed were splendidly provided for by the generosity of Tristam and Courtland, who, by-the-way, nearly quarrelled seriously over the sharing of the spoils.

Tristam and his wife wanted to insist on an equal division of what remained after the crew had received their promised shares—to which Courtland replied that he had got all he wanted in the fun and the glory, and that anyhow a few hundred thousand dollars didn't matter to a man who had already more millions than he knew how to spend. The dispute, however, was at length happily settled to the satisfaction of all concerned by a conversation of a strictly private nature which took place between Courtland and Miss Gwynneth Harley a few days after their return to England, and in a subsequent conversation with Tristam and his wife it was arranged that Courtland's share should be handed over to Miss Harley on her wedding-day.

The *Pocahontas* had been sent round to Elswick for a thorough refit, and on the evening of the day on which the compromise had been affected a very jolly little party of four was sitting over the remnants of a comfortable little family dinner in the room in the old house in Gower Street in which the tragedy of the Gold Magnet had begun. Their travels and adventures in the West were still fresh enough to form a very pleasant subject of conversation amidst the quiet and solid comfort of the English home to which Muriel Tristam had so gladly returned. It was not the first time that they had talked them over, and it would probably not be the last, but the subject was none the less interesting on that account.

"Well, as I have said before," said Muriel putting down her coffee-cup, "I think it was after all very fortunate that we did not get the Gold Magnet back. It was not the sort of thing that any ordinary human being ought to have possessed, and I suppose that is why I was superstitious enough to think there was some curse attached to it. Just look what a story it had the little time it was in the world! No one touched it or even saw it without committing some crime or coming to some miserable end. I wonder what really happened to poor Langton and that unhappy boy?"

"I'm afraid it can't have been anything very choice, seeing what hands they fell into; but it's all over now and it's no good thinking about that, anyhow," said Courtland with a glance across the table at Gwynneth, who was looking down at her dessert plate in rather ominous silence. "There's no fun in opening up accounts like that again, but I'm afraid, Mrs. Tristam, I can hardly agree with you about not getting that Gold Magnet back. If I didn't think it was at the bottom of the Atlantic, I'd hunt the world over for it."

"But," said Gwynneth, looking up, "what good would it be to you when you confessed, as you did the other day, to having more millions than you know what to do with. I really can't see why a man who is as disgracefully rich as you are can want to go wasting his time treasure-hunting."

"Except as a means of varying the monotony of the average honeymoon," laughed Tristam with a glance at his wife. "What's your opinion, dear? Don't you think that on the whole we had what our friend Courtland here would call quite a royal time of it?"

"No, I don't," she said with a not very successful attempt at severity. "In fact I consider that, to a certain extent, you married me under false pretences. You know I objected even to the treasure-hunt, but if I had known there was to be pirate chasing and a naval battle thrown in I should certainly have declined with thanks."

"I don't believe it!" said Gwynneth decisively. "Besides,

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Leigh didn't know anything about the fighting, and you know you wouldn't stop behind when you had the chance to."

"Of course not," laughed Muriel. "A nice sort of adventurer's wife I should have made if I had done. But come now, Mr. Courtland, what would you do with the Magnet if you had it?"

"Well, I don't know that I could tell you right away," he replied. "I suppose I should start out and get the biggest accumulation of gold together that ever was seen in one place. Then I guess I should sit down beside it and think what I was going to do with it. Why, a man who could do that, you know, might have the commerce of the world at his mercy, if he only knew how to run the thing properly."

"There spoke the true American!" said Tristam. "I suppose you wouldn't have any objection to corner the whole gold-supply of the world if you could?"

"That's so," observed Courtland, as though the proposition were quite an ordinary one. "I'd corner the force of gravitation if I could. In fact, I wouldn't mind getting an option on the light and heat of the sun and then renting them out to the planets. I just glory in business on a big scale, you know, not for the dollars, but for the pure fun of the game."

"But I suppose," said Gwynneth, "you would begin in a quiet way by satisfying our curiosity about old Don Christoval's treasure-chest. I wonder if poor little Jessie and that scoundrel Lorrain really found it. D'you know I can't help wishing that she hadn't been on board that horrible little ship when she went down. I'm sure it was that wretch of a Spaniard who made her as bad as she was. Doesn't it seem extraordinary when one remembers her going about her work so demurely and quietly as she did, and then having such wonderful adventures and coming to such an end all within a few weeks as it were! I dare say if we had taken her prisoner or something of that sort she might have repented and given us the Magnet back, and then I should have liked to go and find that treasure-chest."

"My dear Gwyn," said Courtland, "if you have any fancy for Santo Domingo as a place to spend a honeymoon in I shall have great pleasure in buying the river Ozama and having it dug up from the source to the sea, and then making you a wedding- present of the chest when we find it, though personally I think we should get more fun out of another sort of treasure-hunt along Bond Street or Regent Street to-morrow."

"Yes," said Tristam, "I think that's more like it under the circumstances. Let's go and see how Streeter's getting on with the setting of those gems and indulge in the luxury of a little glittering extravagance. We can do that with some satisfaction now, and there's certainly this in it, that if we had got the Gold Magnet back we should all have become such bloated Croesuses that Bond Street wouldn't have been anything more to us than the Lowther Arcade."

"I think that will do for the present," said Gwynneth, with a sparkle of pleasurable anticipation in her eyes. "What do you think, Muriel?"

"I think it's a very good idea indeed," she said. "I'm simply dying to spend some money. You'd better come upstairs with me, Gwyn, and we'll talk over our respective wants."

When the two girls had gone, Courtland and Tristam drew their chairs to the fire and got out their cigars. When he had got his fairly alight, Courtland said:

"Well now, old man, as Gwynneth and I have fixed that little matter up satisfactorily, suppose you give me that bit of family history that you promised me some time ago. Of course it isn't going to make any difference to me, as I'm not going to marry any of Gwyn's ancestry to speak of, but a man naturally likes to hear something about the family that he proposes to perpetuate along with his own."

"Very naturally," said Tristam, "and of course you ought to know it. You'll certainly find this peculiarity in it, that while the men have been a remarkably hard lot, just as old Sir Arthur himself was, the women have been everything that English gentlewomen should be. In fact, as far as I know, the only serious fault that can be laid to the charge of any of them, is the *mésalliance* into which her present ladyship managed to stumble. Poor old girl, I wonder what she's thinking about the end of that precious daughter of hers. There's one thing, Miss Jessie represented the one strain of base blood in the family, and I suppose there's not much fear now of her transmitting it to posterity."

"I can't honestly say that I'm sorry," said the other. "Even if she escaped hanging or imprisonment she'd hardly have been the sort of relation a man would have cared to take round very extensively among his friends, although there are some people in the States who'd go clean mad over her. I don't suppose there's a paper in New York that wouldn't give her a hundred thousand dollars for her life, if she was alive to write it. It would be about the finest bit of copy they had had since the time that they filled columns with telling what size collar young Lord Craven wore, what sort of ink he marked his linen with, and how much of the bottoms of his trousers he turned up. Well, go ahead."

For the next half hour or so Tristam went on giving him the history of the Pendril family as far as he knew it, and that was pretty fully; but there were one or two details that he left out, and he ended his story with the death of Sir Arthur and the re-instatement of the present Lady Jessica Pendril in the old home which would now be Gwynneth's when she died.

"Well, yes," said Courtland after a little pause when he had finished, "the men do seem to have been a pretty tough-laid lot; but after all I don't see that they were any worse people to have as ancestors than a good many of our kings and bosses over the other side would be; but somehow when they did go wrong they always seemed to have done it in a gentlemanly sort of fashion. I suppose that comes of having grandfathers instead of just progenitors, as a man says when he doesn't know or doesn't care to say what stock he comes of. But look here, Tristam, there's one thing you've left out. Of course, you needn't tell me unless you like, and I don't want to pry into any family secrets, but I should very much like to know what old Sir Arthur meant when he said that this little lad could never be his lawful heir, although he was the son of his own son."

Tristam smoked for a few moments in meditative silence, and Courtland helped himself to some whisky and soda. Then Tristam knocked the ash off his cigar and said a little awkwardly:

"Yes, I left that out, not because I think it would have been any breach of confidence to tell you, or that, now you are going to marry into the family, you haven't a perfect right to know the truth. It is simply because that is the blackest part of the whole story, so black indeed, that, however the poor little fellow died, his death was a mercy to him, and so was his mother's too, though of course she wasn't fit to live under any circumstances. If she had lived and brought him back to England and claimed the estates, the whole of the shocking story must of course have come out, for I had given Sir Arthur my word of honour to put his confession, for that's what it amounted to, into his lawyers' hands for them to use as they thought fit, but I hope there is no danger of that now, so when you know it you and I will be the only people in the secret, and you, I know, will keep it as close as I have done."

Courtland nodded and said briefly: "You bet!" and Tristam went on:

"It's a pitiful, miserable story, so bad and black that I hardly like to tell it even to you, so I'll cut it as short as I can. Will it satisfy you for the present if I tell you that in consequence of a *liason*, which Sir Arthur got into a good many years ago in Simla, and which resulted in a decree *nisi*, the laws of consanguinity made a legal marriage between his son and Sybil Viney an impossibility? Of

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course, I don't suppose for a moment that either of them had a suspicion of the truth."

"Good Heavens!" said Courtland, turning a trifle pale. "How horrible! Thanks, I think that will be enough for me. I can guess the rest. 'The sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation.' If a lesson like that wouldn't keep a man straight, I don't know what would. Let's go upstairs and get into a clean atmosphere."

## CHAPTER XL.

### News from the West.

The next morning's shopping was quite as distinguished a success as, under the circumstances, it might have been expected to be. The great Bond Street jeweller wanted very badly either to buy some of the gems from the treasure ship or to exchange them for modern jewellery, but neither Courtland nor Tristam would hear of this, as it had already been decided that the whole of this part of the treasure was to be equally divided between the two brides, and become in due course the heirlooms of the new Tristam and Courtland families.

When the shopping was over and the respective bank balances of the two friends had been reduced by some thousands of pounds, Courtland excused himself for half-an-hour in order to drive to his agents in Cockspur Street to get his mail. When he rejoined them later on at the Princes' Restaurant for lunch it struck them that he was looking a good deal graver then when he went away, and his share in the conversation did not come quite so spontaneously as it was wont to do, but he kept his counsel not only through lunch but through the whole afternoon, which was mainly devoted to a matinée at the Haymarket.

They dined at home as usual, and during dinner Courtland's fits of silence became more noticeable, and at last Tristam said:

"You don't seem to have been quite yourself this afternoon, Courtland. I hope you haven't had any bad news from home among your letters?"

"Well, not exactly that perhaps," he replied, "but it's a fact that I've had some pretty serious news. I kept it until to-night because I didn't want to spoil sport this afternoon."

"You dear, good, considerate creature!" said Gwynneth with a rewarding smile. "You let us enjoy our shopping and our theatre unsuspectingly, and saved up your news for to-night, when I suppose you were bursting to tell it all the time. Now, that's a thing that no woman could have done."

"Speak for yourself, miss, please!" said Muriel more soberly. "And how do you know that we are going to be told at all? The news may be private, and I don't suppose Mr. Courtland tells you *everything* yet."

"It isn't private at all," said Courtland. "In fact, it concerns everybody here just as much as it does me, and a few days ago it would have concerned you more. I kept it until now because I thought it would go better told altogether, and there's a good bit of it.

"It's this way," he went on with characteristic directness. "An uncle of mine is Senator for Washington State—not Washington City you know, but the State out west on the Pacific coast, near the Canadian boundary. I've had a long letter from him, which quite confirms those reports we saw in the paper the other day about the steamers bringing the gold from the Klondyke not turning up to time. It seems that the *Portland*, which sailed from St. Michaels six weeks ago, and the *City of Seattle*, which left Juneau a few days later, are both missing. They are supposed to have had between two and three millionsworth of gold on board, and they've vanished utterly. The *Charlston* has been sent out from San Francisco, and a British cruiser from Victoria, to look for them, and nothing more has been heard of them.

"Of course, there's a lot of excitement about it, as the cables in the papers told us; but what the cables didn't tell us is that a mysterious yacht has been traced all up the Pacific coast from Valpariso to *Seattle* and *Victoria*, and that she, too, supposed to be bound for St. Michaels and up the Yukon, has also vanished."

"Surely," said Muriel and Gwynneth almost in the same breath, "you can't mean that she's the *Minnehaha?*"

"Well, that wasn't her name. This one was called the *Circe*, and she had only one funnel instead of two, and her papers were all right, though, of course, that doesn't go for very much. I have no doubt that little blackguard Peters would be quite smart enough to carry a duplicate set, or my cousin Van Suyler may have done so when he started out fillibustering. The funnel's a greater difficulty, but I suppose they could have had that altered. What seems most important to me is that although no one saw the mysterious craft steam any faster than ordinary, when they came to trace her up the coast they found that she must have steamed at a tremendous speed when she got out of sight of land in order to make the ports in the time she did. Another thing, she engaged extra men at Valparaiso and Callao, though she never seemed to have more than an average crew on board. Lastly, they found in Seattle after she'd gone that her owner and captain tallied almost exactly with the description we gave of Lorraine and Peters, and, further, that there were two ladies on board——"

"Jessie and Sybil Viney, of course!" cried Gwynneth who had been listening with open-eyed amazement. "Then we didn't sink that horrible little yacht after all. Leigh, what do you think of that!"

Tristam was looking something like Muriel remembered him on a former occasion in her own sitting-room, upstairs, but he said very quietly:

"Well, if it is so, and of course it's quite possible, because we are not absolutely certain that we did sink her, the only thing to do will be to go and hunt her up again, and either capture her or sink her in good earnest this time, that is, of course, if Courtland is willing, for the *Pocahontas* is the only thing afloat that has any chance with her as regards speed."

"Oh, I'm there," said Courtland. "You needn't be afraid of that. This is a personal matter with me now. I don't take a thing up and drop it again before I'm through, just because I find it a bit hot to hold. The ocean's pretty big, but there isn't room on it for the *Pocahontas* and the *Minnehaha*, as long as she's got her present owner and skipper on board. No, we'll hurry up the refitting and start as soon as can be. We'll have to get a sort of commission this time, I suppose, either from your Government or Uncle Sam, and do the thing in regular form, but do it somehow we must and will."

"That's good hearing!" said Tristam. "I don't think there'll be much difficulty about that. We've proved our good faith already, and they know that if the *Circe* is the *Minnehaha*, yours is the only boat that has a chance of catching her."

"We'll call that settled then," said Courtland, "and now I suppose the first thing to do is to get the *Pocahontas* afloat again. I propose we go up to Elswick to-morrow and hurry them up about it."

Fortunately the Elswick people did not need much hurrying, as the repairs of the *Pocahontas* were already practically finished. Then came interviews at the Foreign Office and the Admiralty, the result of which was that the British Government, without committing itself to any official responsibility, allowed the owner of the vessel to lay in ample stores of ammunition and to ship a dozen experienced gunners at his own expense. He was also given an official recommendation to the Admiral on the Pacific station which set forth the object of the cruise and stated his willingness to receive a responsible officer on board at Victoria before proceeding in search of the pirate. The Admiral was also requested to give Courtland and Tristam

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every assistance in his power on the condition that the *Pocahontas* flew the White Ensign while she was in charge of a British naval officer, but that she should also work in harmony with the American squadron that was patrolling the coasts in search of the *Minnehaha*. Lastly, as it had been decided to make the run to the eastward so as to avoid the bad weather round Cape Horn and in the South Atlantic, she was to carry an order from the Admiralty enabling her to coal at any of the naval stations on the way, so that, so far as weather permitted, she would be able to make the whole journey at nearly full speed.

There was naturally a somewhat lively discussion as to whether Muriel and Gwynneth should accompany the expedition or not, but the ladies as usual had their way and went, at any rate as far as Victoria. Courtland, however, saw an opportunity in this discussion which he took advantage of with characteristic quickness. He absolutely refused to extend the hospitality of the *Pocahontas* to Gwynneth save on one condition—and this in the end she had to yield to, and the consequence was that when the cruiser-yacht at length cleared the Needles and steamed away at a good round twenty-five knots down Channel, she was once more being used for the purposes of a sea going honeymoon as well as for the sterner business of pirate-hunting.

## CHAPTER XLI.

### The "Minnehaha's" Last Victim.

The short northern summer was slipping fast away, and the mystery which involved the fate of the gold-ships homeward-bound from St. Michael's and Juneau was still unsolved, save for the conviction held by Tristam and his friends that their disappearance could only be due to the work of the *Minnehaha*. Ship after ship had left the northern ports loaded with gold, fresh-won from the inexhaustible treasure-house of the Arctic El Dorado, and carrying, as the ill-fated *Portland* had done, men and women, whom a few months of hard toil and privation had made rich, and therefore happy and hopeful. Ship after ship had steamed out over the grey northern sea never to be seen or heard of again, and meanwhile the treasure in the *Minnehaha's* hold had gone on growing until now nearly fifty tons of gold, in bars and nuggets and dust, awaited division among those who had eclipsed all the crimes of the old piracy to obtain it.

Three gun-boats, one American and two British, had been sent northward to patrol the coast and make inquiries as to the fate of the missing vessels, and the weeks had passed by bringing no tidings until these, too, had been numbered among the missing.

This was the state of affairs when the *Pocahontas*, having fallen in with the Canadian-Pacific mail-steamer *Empress of China* about two hundred miles westward of Cape Flattery, on her voyage from Hong-Kong, convoyed her to Victoria. At Victoria a joint British and United States squadron was lying off in the Straits waiting for her, ready to steam up the coast, and, if necessary, sweep it from end to end in the effort to discover this new scourge of the sea, whose work was done so thoroughly that it left no trace behind it, and either to compel the pirate to disgorge her colossal gains or send her to the bottom with them. Instructions had been sent up to all the ports from which gold could be shipped southward that all treasure must either be kept in the country or forwarded overland until further notice. This had been sent over the newly-constructed land telegraph lines, for all sea communication had absolutely stopped, and from Queen Charlotte Sound to Behring Straits the North Pacific was as silent and mysterious as it had been in the days of its first discovery.

But all this while the *Minnehaha* had been at sea under a full head of steam day and night, ready either to attack or run away, and coal and oil would soon become even more precious than gold unless another capture could be made. Some of the gold-ships had come back very scantily supplied with fuel. Their captains had sold it at enormous prices in the North, and had only kept just enough to steam home with. Consequently they had yielded very little to their captor and destroyer, and the fuel question was becoming a very serious one indeed. In addition to this, the necessity of constantly keeping the sea in waters teaming with animal life had so fouled the yacht's bottom that her speed was materially diminished, and although she was of course still able to steam round the slow-going ocean tramps, both Captain Peters and Lorrain had very serious misgivings as to her being able to hold her own against the torpedo-boat destroyers that might be sent out from Victoria to look for her, to say nothing of the *Pocahontas*, should she return to the chase when the news of the missing gold-ships reached Europe.

There were two courses to be taken, and both of them had been earnestly debated in the *Minnehaha's* cabin. One was to stand out across the Pacific and lie in wait for one of the Empress steamers from Yokohama, treat her as they had treated the gold-ships, and then go on to some conveniently secluded spot, where the treasure could be divided and the yacht handed over to Captain Peters, while Lorrain and her ladyship betook themselves with their millions and the Gold Magnet to some part of South America, there to lose their identity and enjoy themselves quietly until the fame of their exploits had been dimmed by carefully circulated reports of the loss of the *Minnehaha* and all hands.

The other course was to stand into the coast and watch for the steamer *State of Oregon*, which, according to the information received at Seattle, would be sailing from Juneau in three or four days' time. In the end this second course was decided upon, partly because, even with the colossal treasure they had on board, neither Lorrain nor Captain Peters could resist the chance of one more *coup*, but mainly because, after a careful examination, the skipper came to the conclusion that it would not be safe to enter upon a four or five thousand-mile run without a considerable addition to the fast-dwindling stock of fuel. Had the other alternative been taken the probability is that the *Minnehaha* would have fallen in, not only with the *Empress of China*, but with the *Pocahontas* as well, in which case the final scene in the tragedy of the Gold Magnet would have been played out in mid-Pacific, the fifty tons of stolen gold would have now been lying buried under several thousand fathoms of water, and the Gold Magnet itself would have been lost to the world for ever.

It so happened that the *State of Oregon* was the last ship to sail with treasure from St. Michael's before the prohibition just mentioned came into force, and it also came to pass that, just at nightfall on the day on which the *Minnehaha* made the land of Graham Island, which with Moresby Island and a multitude of islets makes up the Queen Charlotte group, Her Majesty's Destroyer *Mallard*, on scout duty at the mouth of Dixon's Entrance, saw her smoke and sped away southward to rejoin her consorts, which were her sister-destroyer the *Quail* and the *Pocahontas* herself.

She managed to join them unseen, and as soon as she had given her welcome news the *Quail* sent off full speed to carry it to the Admiral in command of the joint squadron, and ask him to bring his ships as rapidly as possible up Hecate Strait, which runs between the islands and the mainland, so as to cut off the pirate's escape to the southward, if the *Pocahontas* and her consorts succeeded in shutting her into the narrow waters—after which the *Quail* returned to take her share in the sport.

The *State of Oregon* had left Juneau the previous day, and had steamed southward through the intricate channels between the Alexander Archipelago and the coast. This was rightly considered to be a much safer course than the open sea route, as it was very unlikely that the pirates would venture so close into the land, or run the risk of getting entangled in the narrow waterways among the islands. This was perfectly correct, and if the gold-ship

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had been a few hours earlier or later, she would have escaped the fate which awaited her, and had the honour of being the only vessel to get her precious cargo safely into port.

The *Minnehaha*, all unconscious of the little black craft that was flying away to the southward, bearing the fatal news, steamed boldly into Dixon's Entrance under cover of a slight mist and the deepening twilight. Boldness and rapidity of action were now her safest tactics, for it was absolutely essential that she should replenish her bunkers as speedily as possible. If she could not do that she would not be able to keep the sea for another week, and then sooner or later she must fall a prey to one of the war-ships, which were so diligently seeking her. In short, a few tons of coal and a few barrels of petroleum would make all the difference now between escape and prosperity, or capture and death.

Tristam and Courtland and the naval commander who had been taken on board at Victoria had very little difficulty in coming to the conclusion that the vessel reported by the *Mallard* could not well be any other than the *Minnehaha*, She could not be a gold-ship from St. Michael's. In the first place, none was due to leave until after the prohibition would have reached the Yukon, and, in the second place, all the St. Michael's ships would make a direct course across the Gulf of Alaska and would not touch the islands at all. Then, again, they easily guessed that the pirates would be in difficulties about fuel, and would have to come in sooner or later on the chance of picking up either the *State of Oregon* or some other coasting-steamer and taking her coal out of her.

They knew that Lorrain had got accurate information as to the sailing of the gold-ships, and so, taking everything into consideration, they felt justified in concluding that the steamer from Juneau was the bait that was attracting the *Minnehaha* into the trap they were laying for her.

"I hope that hooker won't be much behind time, Seenyor," said Captain Peters to Lorrain as they went slipping along close under the north coast of Graham's Island. "We can't spare the fuel to wait for him very long, and I'd just hate to be caught in here among these islands by any of them cruisers that'll be looking for us by this time. We mightn't get away with her as easy as we did with the gun-boats, but coal we must have. We didn't get more than forty tons out of that last one and, excepting that fifty that I'm keeping for a last rush in case of accidents, we haven't got enough for a full day's steaming."

"Oh, there's no doubt about that!" replied Lorrain shortly. "Coal we want and coal we must have, whatever it costs, even if we have to fight for it. I reckoned on getting a hundred tons apiece at least out of those other ships. Who the deuce would have thought that they would only have just enough to carry them home! It only shows how the smartest of us can make the simplest mistakes. Ah, look out yonder over the port bow! Do you see a light? There, almost dead ahead! I'm certain I did just then. Quicken her up and let us go and see what it is. I shouldn't wonder if we've caught her in the very nick of time."

Captain Peters snatched up his glass out of the case hanging on the bridge-rail in front of him and took a long, silent, anxious look in the direction that Lorrain was pointing.

Then the mist lifted a little from the water and he caught the distant glimmer of a green light.

"Bully for you, Seenyor! That's her, or maybe something else that has coals aboard. I guess our luck hasn't petred out yet. If we can get another hundred and fifty tons out of her we'll skip southward, hold up one or two tramps, fill from them, and make tracks. This part of the world's getting unhealthier for us every day, and we want to be well out of the way before your friend Tristam brings that hooker of his out looking for us. We couldn't race her for shucks now. I reckon thirty's about the outside we could do now, and that would take an almighty lot of coal."

As he spoke he rang for full speed, and the *Minnehaha* sprang forward with an added ten knots. The green light seemed to run towards them, and a few minutes later the black hull of a large steamer loomed out through the grey mist.

The *Minnehaha* carried no lights and had run alongside the *State of Oregon* almost before she was sighted Then came the usual hail and order to lie to, followed by the usual panic when it became plain to those on board the gold-ship that the wicked-looking little craft could be none other than the mysterious and much-dreaded pirate whose unknown deeds were already the wonder and the speculation of the whole coast.

But the captain of the *State of Oregon* was made of sterner stuff than the captain of the *Portland*, for instance, had been, and he answered the summons to surrender with a flat refusal couched in anything but drawing-room language.

If he had to be sunk, as the others no doubt had been, he would go down with his gold and his coal on board, for he was fully determined that the pirates should get no steaming power out of his ship. Added to this, he felt pretty certain that there must be war-ships somewhere about the Strait and possibly within sound of guns. To surrender meant to be sunk after his ship had been rifled, and so his one hope of safety lay in a rescue. Consequently he sent orders to keep the engines working at their utmost power whatever happened, and passed the word for the crew and male passengers to get up their arms and prepare to make a running fight of it. The order was obeyed both below and on deck in a grim silence, and rifles and revolvers and ammunition were got out with a readiness which promised not a little blood-letting before the pirates got their way with the treasure-ship *State of Oregon*.

The point-blank refusal to surrender not only infuriated Lorrain and Captain Peters, but it put them into a very awkward dilemma. The very last thing they wanted to do was to open fire. They knew very well that the noise of the cannonade might easily attract the notice of some prowling warship, and in addition to that they might just as well, or even better, let the gold-ship alone than send her to the bottom, for in that case the priceless coal would go with her, so, after a hurried consultation, Captain Peters ran up closer and offered to allow the treasure-ship to proceed unmolested in consideration of a hundred tons of coal, to which the captain of the *State of Oregon* replied tersely:

"I'll see you where coals ain't wanted first. All you get from me you'll have to take. I ain't fitting out any pirates this trip. There's a squadron of warships down the Straits, and the sooner you start shooting the quicker they'll come up, so blaze away and be darned to you!"

Now, whether this was true or not, it made the situation a very awkward one. Still neither Captain Peters nor his owner was the man to let the precious coal go without a struggle. They offered fifty pounds and then a hundred pounds a ton for it, paid down in gold, but all the answer they got was a warning to sheer off or stand the chances of a volley. At this Captain Peters lost the last remnants of his temper and his prudence, and gave orders for two of the Maxims to prepare to open fire.

"There's nothing else to be done, Seenyor," he whispered. "They've got a lot of rifles on deck there, and if we let them shoot first some of us may get hurt. It isn't going to be no Sunday-school treat, this isn't."

Then he pulled out his own revolver and opened the ball by sending a bullet into the chest of the brave captain of the *State of Oregon*. The next instant the harsh thudding roar of the Maxims crashed out, the two streams of bullets swept the decks of the treasure-ship from end to end, strewing them instantly with scores of dead and dying.

*(To be concluded next week.)*

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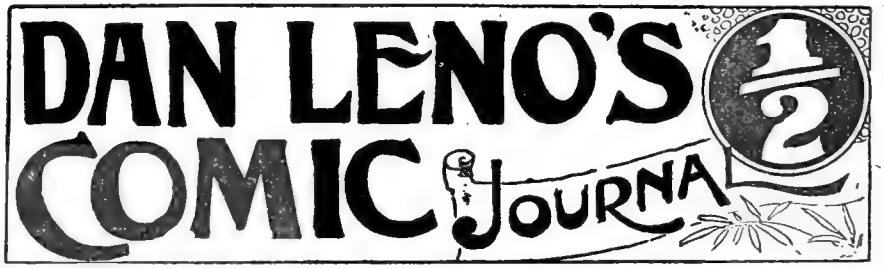


## All about the King of Funny Papers, Edited by the King of Funny Men.

### It will be hot from the Press and ready for you on

### One Halfpenny.] TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22nd. [One Halfpenny.

Previous notices in *. *. of my Comic Journal have doubtless aroused your curiosity, which I am now able to satisfy fully. Hosts of my friends have besieged me personally and through the post in the hopes of learning before the right time what Dan Leno's Comic Journal is going to be like. But up till this moment they have not been satisfied. When the news of my Comic Journal leaked out I was pestered by all sorts of folks begging me to grant various requests of a more or less expensive nature—mostly more. The suggestions I received from my friends and acquaintances would last me for half a century, and furnish material for seventeen papers of extraordinary size.

Three people sent me minute instructions of how it was to be run, two gratuitously. A gentleman in the North of England sent me 2lb. of poetry written by his daughter, and implored me to give the dear girl a start by printing a few ounces of it in the first number; while a lady residing in Kent said she and four of her friends thought what a capital idea it would be to print an insurance coupon every week insuring babies against juvenile ailments. Her letter ended: "N.B.—I have six children."

Circulars came pouring in every morning reminding me that Green's Patent Braces and Jinks' Cough Syrup were unrivalled, and that if I cared to say so in my Comic Journal I might have a few samples and test them. But all such kind and generous appeals I have had to disregard, for my paper has to be run on strictly business lines, and not as an advertising medium or a charity affair.

My first care will be to carry out the idea in the title of my new journal and make it really comic. There will be nothing in it that the most sensitive of us can take offence at. It will be crammed with humourous pictures, side-splitting jokes, and good stories. Never before will such a collection of first-class pictures and good literature have been sold for so small a sum.

But you must get a copy on Tuesday and use your own judgment. You will say I am right.

Every week I shall chat, and talk, and joke with my readers. All my funniest experiences will be confessed in the columns of "Daniel's Diary." Nor will the comic element monopolise everything. The opening chapters of a magnificent serial,

### "THE MARK OF MYSTERY,"

will appear in the first number. "The Mark of Mystery" has been written specially for Dan Leno's Comic Journal by one of the best known authors of the day. You will read every word of it and long for more.

It is the story of a triple crime, a story of stirring incident, mystery, true pathos, and genuine humour.

Don't miss this wonderful story, and don't forget that it begins on Tuesday in Dan Leno's Comic Journal.

Everyone likes a good short story, but good short stories are difficult to obtain. If you will turn to page 3 of Dan Leno's Comic Journal you will find one of the best.

Each week Dan Leno's Comic Journal will contain a short, complete story of entrancing interest—in fact, the finest stories that money can buy and authors write.

If you want a good laugh—not a mere half-hearted chuckle, but a hearty, honest laugh—buy Dan Leno's Comic Journal; if you would like to try for a big prize, be at your newsagent's early on Tuesday.

Dan Leno's Comic Journal is the most colossal collection of good things ever sold for the price in the history of journalism.

Remember, it will be published every Tuesday; it will consist of the cleverest work of all our best authors and artists; it will cost only One Halfpenny.

The first number will be on sale everywhere on Tuesday, February 22nd.

There will be hundreds of funny pictures, hundreds of side-splitting jokes, one of the finest serials ever penned, short stories, mirthful anecdotes, and a whole host of other fascinating reading.

Everything in it will be fresh and racy—it will not contain a dry line or a stale joke.

Order your copy at once.

I hope to meet you all again on Tuesday. Until then,

I remain,

Yours sweetly,

Dan Leno

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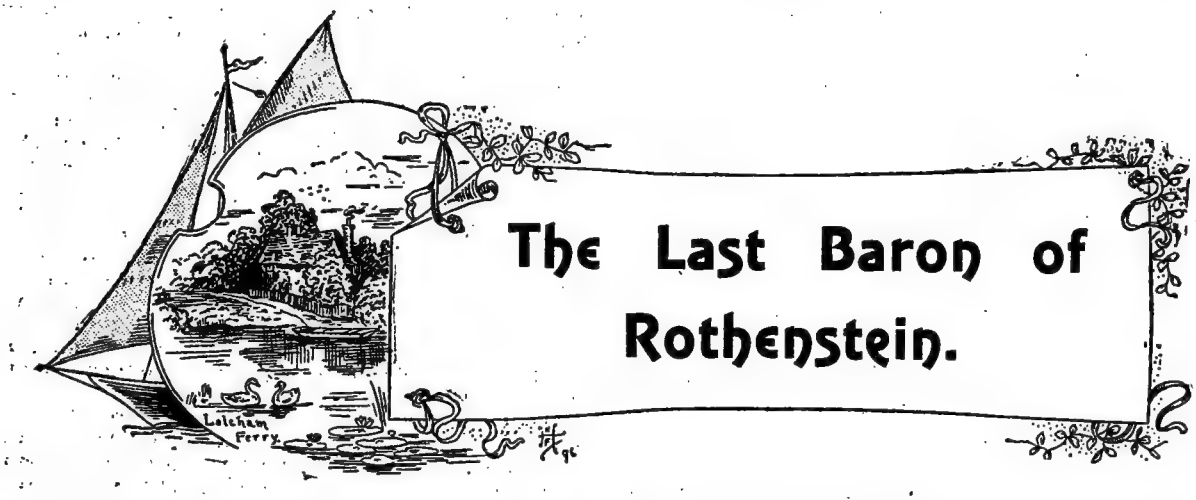


# The Last Baron of Rothenstein.

In many parts of Germany, especially along the borders of that great tract of wooded mountains and valleys called the Thuringian Forest, a mountain top without its castle would be an anomaly strange enough to call forth a wondering question. Some of these edifices are mere ruins, but others are still in good condition, and inhabited by the descendants of those who built them.

Rothenstein, overlooking the little village of Egersdorf—these are fictitious names on account of the story that follows—is one of the ancient German castles which are still habitable. Like all its companions in the German Empire, the castle is full of legendary matter; every room, every corridor, has some story attached to it, and most of these legends are gruesome enough.

At the present time, the only occupants of Rothenstein are an old caretaker and his wife. Visitors are permitted to inspect the castle, but there is one portion of it to which only specially-privileged persons are admitted. That is the picture gallery. If you ask why it is always kept closed, you will be told simply that the Baron was found dead in the gallery.

Last autumn, while spending my holiday in the Thuringian Forest, I secured the privilege of inspecting the castle, including the picture gallery. It was an uncanny place, that gallery of portraits; even I felt a creeping sensation in the small of my back, and I could hardly be surprised that the caretaker did not venture across the threshold. I glanced at a few of these pictures of knights of old, and was about to retrace my steps when my eyes fell upon a portrait that compelled my attention.

It hung in the most prominent place in the room—for it was a room, not a gallery—over the fireplace opposite the door; it was so remarkable than I cannot imagine how it happened that it did not strike me as soon as I entered. It was a life-sized figure of a cavalier of the seventeenth century, in doublet and hose, with his hand upon the hilt of the rapier at his side. The face was that of a man about fifty, and so real was the representation of the countenance that it seemed to stand out from the canvas as if it were flesh and blood; the eyes were cold and determined, and the mouth was shut close and hard, as if with unalterable purpose. It was a stern face, though one hesitated to call it a cruel one; yet it betokened a will that would brook no opposition, and a heart that knew no forgiveness. I discovered afterwards that he fell in the battle of Lutzen.

Before leaving the castle I tried to obtain from the old man some particulars concerning the death of the Baron, and the reason for keeping that room closed. I felt that the portrait was mixed up in the story; but all I could get from him was that old Marie knew. She lived in the village, and had been his nurse. It did not take long to find the old woman, but I had to pay several visits before I could persuade her to tell me what she knew. At length I succeeded.

I cannot give it exactly in her own words, for it was broken, and there was much that I had to elicit by judicious questions; but the following is the narrative in coherent form:

"Hugo von Rothenstein, over two hundred years ago, rebuilt the castle that had always belonged to his family, and left it as it stands to-day, for the buildings themselves have never since been changed, though there are now gardens where there used to be walls and ditches. He lived much in foreign parts—now in this country and now in that—and sometimes years would go by before he returned. Only a part of the castle at that time could be lived in; the rest was old, and had gradually become almost a ruin. One spring, after a long absence, he appeared unexpectedly, and soon after, a great many men were at work tearing down and replacing the oldest parts and adding new ones. A year after this time, when the south wing had been completed, he brought back a beautiful young Englishwoman as his bride. For a number of years they lived up at the Rothenstein in peace and happiness, while the one son that had been given to them was growing up, and by-and-bye he, too, in his turn went away, as his father had done before him, to see the world outside. I do not know just where it was, but in another part of Germany he fell in love with a girl of his own rank, and came back and announced his intention of making her his wife. To his surprise and consternation, the father, who, it seems, had designs for him in a wholly different direction, absolutely refused to countenance it; and not only that, he set himself like flint against it, and forbade him passionately to have anything further to do in the matter.

"The son was, however, made of just as determined

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stuff as his father, and without more ado, as soon as he could get to her, married the girl out of hand. What he ought not to have done, in hope of forgiveness from one who did not know how to forgive either in this life or after it"; and the old woman paused with a look on her as if she, too, had been an actor in this drama two centuries ago.

"Before many months had passed the son brought his young wife to the Rothenstein. In spite of the prayers and supplications of the mother, who threw herself on her knees before him, old Baron Hugo did not even allow his son to enter the castle, but reviled him outside like a dog, and not only him, but his descendants to the remotest generations. The son never returned again in his father's lifetime. The mother soon after died, it is said, of a broken heart, and the old Baron himself went abroad and finally was killed at Lutzen. A year or two after he was dead, the great picture of him that now hangs at the head of the picture gallery, over the fireplace, was sent from abroad—some say from Spain—where it was painted by one of their greatest artists; but mark my word," she added impressively, "no human artist painted that picture that has blighted the whole house for all these years, and nobody suspected it until I saw it with my own eyes."

Her vehemence had exhausted her, and it was some time before she went on.

"After his father's death, the son came back with his wife and a boy, their only child. The picture gallery at that time had not been completed, as I have heard, and the portrait of old Hugo hung in the long corridor. There, early one morning, they found the knight of the Rothenstein dead, pierced to the heart, they said, by the sword that he even then held tight in his hand.

"It is a gloomy story that follows," old Marie added wearily. "Old Baron Hugo's grandson finally completed the picture-gallery, and the portrait was hung where it is to-day, but where it would not be if I had my way. The Baron was only a man of forty, as you may still see on the stone in the chapel, when one day he was found dead, and, like his father, evidently by his own sword that lay beside him. This time, however, the deed had been done in the picture-gallery. Neither in his own case nor in that of his father was there any apparent reason for such an act. They had both lived peaceful lives, without harassment or care.

"For six generations the story I have told you has been the same. My Hugo's great-grandfather, his grandfather, his father, and finally he himself, have all gone the same way—all have died alone from a sword thrust in the heart. A bane, everybody said, had fallen on the family, that impels them all to take their lives—old Baron Hugo's curse when he drove his son away—but they never thought of the thing that I knew was the real cause of all this misery.

"My Hugo," continued the old woman, "was as fine and frank a lad as the old castle had ever seen. He always had a happy life, but sometimes I could not bear to watch him, for I knew how certain was the fate that hung over him. But he never suspected it, and grew up and went away, and then came back a man, full grown, and handsomer than his father or his grandfather, whom I remember to have seen as a child. And by-the-bye he brought a wife to the Rothenstein, and they were very happy together, and two children were born. They are all away now, and have never been back since he died."

It was a long time before she resumed her story, "Ten years ago this very day was his thirtieth birthday, They were all so happy The Baroness and the children had surprised him with their gifts, and we had all congratulated him, I first of all. There was no invited company, but it was a holiday at the castle, and the flags were flying, and flowers had been placed everywhere, and there were to be lanterns out under the trees in the evening, but they were never lighted. Late in the afternoon," her voice trembled almost to a whisper, "I was going alone along the corridor, past the door of the picture gallery. The long passage itself was empty, but when I was exactly opposite the door I heard the quick stamp of a foot, and then the click of steel striking against steel. At first, I could not believe my ears, and I stopped still and listened. All at once it came upon me what it meant. O Heaven! I thought, to-day! to-day! and though I could scarcely move, I trembled so, I threw myself against the door and burst it open.

"There, in the middle of the room—Heavens! that I should ever have lived to see it!—stood my Hugo, his sword drawn in defence; and opposite him his cold eye fixed upon him, and his rapier just ready to thrust, was the old Hugo of the picture there in the flesh again. And while I was looking, in an instant the thrust had been given, and my Hugo threw up his arms and fell, and, even as he reeled, the old man coolly wiped his sword, and put it back in the scabbard at his side. Only then I shrieked at the horror of the thing, and fell fainting across the threshold.

"It was dark when I came to myself again, and some time before I could realise what had happened and give the alarm. It was too late; my Hugo was dead. Again, they whispered, the curse had fallen, and the Baron of the Rothenstein has taken his life. They would not listen to my story when I told them how he had fought for his life, where no human arm could prevail, and how foully he had been murdered under my very eyes. But, as God is my witness, I saw him fall, and old Hugo von Rothenstein struck the blow!"

This was old Marie's story, and, though we questioned her more minutely as to some of its points, nothing could cause her to vary its details, or could shake her belief in its truth.

We met the physician of the district once at Marie's cottage, and afterwards took occasion to question him about her story, which we found he had heard. He had been called, it appeared, to the castle, as soon as the body of the Baron had been discovered, and it was true that Marie had first come upon it in the picture gallery, where it lay on the floor. There was nothing to show, he said, that he had not committed suicide, and the sword, an old French rapier that had been taken down from among the weapons in the room, lay a short distance from him, where he had flung it as he fell. "There was no blood on the blade," he added thoughtfully, "as I remarked at the time, but that may be accounted for by purely natural causes, for, like many others in the collection, it had been oiled to keep off the rust."

Marie's story had made a profound impression upon us, and once more we questioned her about its incidents, but she shook her head, and said she should never tell it again. Later in the summer her health failed fast, and one day, on our way to her cottage, our friend, the physician, met us and told us she was dead. "And her story, doctor," we asked, "did you believe it?"

"She certainly believed it," he said, "and who shall say that it may not have been true?"

W. H. Carpenter.

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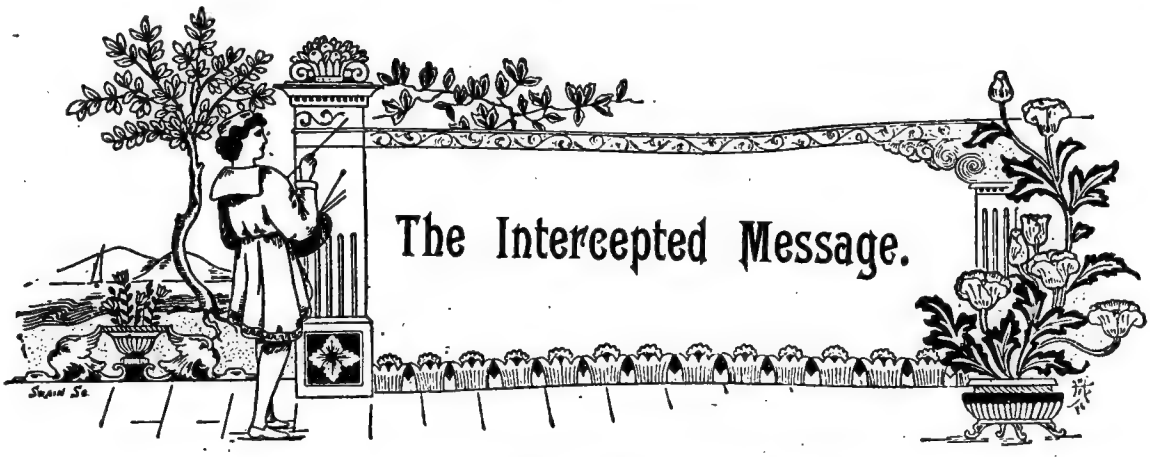

# The Intercepted Message.

Sitting in a Birmingham hotel one November evening, carelessly running over the headings of a newspaper, I had my eyes and wandering thoughts arrested by a paragraph that stirred some pleasant memories. Stepping to the table near at hand I was clipping the item of news when a handsome, athletic young fellow approached from the opposite side, knife and paper in hand. A moment later each noticed that the other was preserving the same information. Our eyes met, his brown and laughing, mine blue and aggressive.

"Beg pardon," he began with a smile that lighted up his dark face and showed his strong white teeth to advantage, "odd coincidence, isn't it?"

"I don't know," with some constraint. "Up to a short time ago my experience was so entirely along one pleasant line that my thoughts never went outside it. Of late, surprises have come so rapidly that they cease to surprise. Do you know her?"

"I'm inclined to think it my privilege to do the interrogating in this instance, but you have already satisfied my chief curiosity in the matter. If you were not acquainted with Margie Morell you would scarcely be putting that flattering criticism away into your pocket-book."

"You speak familiarly of her;" and despite my efforts to imitate his easy manner there was a challenge in my voice.

"Naturally enough;" and his smile was the more aggravating because the more genial. "I have known her for years. Used to carry her books, haul her on her little cart, walk with her, ride with her, encourage her when success in music seemed so far off, and all that. Held her on my knee a thousand times."

Now there was no effort at self-control on my part.

"You are a scoundrel and a blackguard!" I whispered, as I leant over the table. "If I ever hear of your repeating such language I'll find a way to punish you without involving the name of the young lady you have been coward enough to slander."

No change in his smile, but a little more blood in his face, as he said:

"Rather quick-tempered, it seems to me."

"Yes; but a man who tries to retain the virtues of chivalry without its faults. I wish to say nothing more to you."

"But I like you; I insist on pursuing the acquaintance. It makes me happy to chance upon so stout a champion of Margie."

I was on the point of saying or doing something violent, when he continued:

"Hold on a minute, my bold chevalier;" and this time he laughed outright. "I'm Fred Morell, Margie's brother. In fact, I'm the responsible head of the family. Have you any special right to fight the battles of my sister?"

"Only the right of a gentleman who holds her in the highest respect," I replied, somewhat taken aback. "I met her abroad with her mother. I was completing my education in medicine, and Miss Morell was cultivating her wonderful voice. In the midst of an acquaintance so delightful to me I received news of my father's sudden death, and with it the startling information that disastrous speculation had wiped out the large fortune that I had always been led to expect. I hastened home, spent six months in settling up the affairs of the estate, and have just come here to see what I can make of talents that have never yet been called upon to earn anything."

"It might have been worse. You are Dr. Tom Curran. I've heard them speak of you frequently. Why not take a run out with me and renew the acquaintance?"

It was a temptation, and we are prone to compromise with temptation. I could not go then because I was to spend a couple of weeks with my one relative, Uncle Bruff Curran, who lived a mile or two out of Birmingham. But when Fred and I parted it had been arranged that I should spend a week with the Morell household.

At Uncle Bruff's I was having a glorious time, though he was a bachelor of sixty, and cynical as he was rich. My strange experience there began one afternoon when I was out shooting.

The sport was fast and furious, and I was banging away without any precautions, for the game was in a desolate preserve, and the thought of danger to anyone else never entered my mind. But my confidence in the fact of my complete isolation was brought up with a short turn. I had just let go with both barrels at a flying bunch of quail, when I heard a shout of terror and witnessed a laughable sight.

It was a man literally dropping down a telegraph pole, his eyes big with fright, and a false beard shifted to the side of his face. The fine shot had peppered him

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harmlessly, but he thought that he had been fired upon, and was beginning to plead for mercy when I approached him. A ringing laugh reassured him, and he managed to tell me in a quiet, natural manner that he was along the line making some repairs.

In my amusement I quite forgot the false beard, and that fact slipped from my memory till long afterwards.

When I went in I found a new guest at the house. He was manager of the then leading bank in Birmingham, of which uncle was a director and large shareholder. After dinner we smoked together, and the two old men told me what had brought the manager there.

A short time before two smart and distinguished-looking gentlemen had flashed upon the most exclusive social circle of the city. They dressed just within the extreme of fashion, spent money with princely prodigality, and one of them had placed £4,000 in their bank just to meet the expenses of the brief visit. He had been introduced to the manager's family, and made such an inroad upon the daughter's affections that their engagement was currently reported. This depositor had unexceptional letters, and each one guaranteed him entitled to unlimited credit.

One afternoon he rushed hurriedly into the bank. He just had had a letter from one of his best and wealthiest friends in Liverpool. He was to have met a Birmingham lawyer that very day to pay a balance on £15,000 on an important concession abroad. Business involving an enormous sum kept this Liverpool financier at home, and, despite his wealth, he did not have the ready money to meet the engagement. Would his old friend, known in Birmingham as Lawrence Bochart, draw on his own funds and look after the matter. There was an assured profit of several thousands, and they would share it.

"Is it all right?" asked the manager, who was dazzled with Bochart and his apparently fabulous riches.

"I would like to help my friend, for it is my disposition. But let me insist that you first telegraph my bank in London, to see whether it will honour a draft for the amount required. For your kindness in the matter I want you to accept half the gain which my friend will make through the deal."

"I cannot think of it," replied the manager.

"Then, sir, let me make it a wedding present to your daughter. I have not asked her hand, but, with your permission, I will do so."

"I sent the telegram at once," said the manager to my uncle and myself. In half-an-hour I had an answer, signed by the manager, informing me that Mr. Bochart's account was far more than equal to the demand made upon it. I may have been blinded somewhat by the impression the young man had made upon me, and the prospect of having him for a son-in-law, but I took the usual precautions, though the largeness of the amount at stake might have demanded more.

We went to the hotel and paid the lawyer in cash, as stipulated by the terms of the contract. He said that he would have preferred it in a draft, as less risky to carry about, but he would be round before the close of banking hours to deposit the sum with us. I had no sooner returned to the bank than I received a telegram from the London bank, saying that Lawrence Bochart had no account there, and never had. Then it came upon me with the force of a terrible blow that the wire must have been tapped, that we were swindled, and that the bank was crippled beyond hope of recovery. For myself, I was ruined.

"Of course," continued the manager, "the rascal who cut such a dash in Society did not distribute his photographs, but my daughter is something of an artist, and she sketched the fellow from memory. Here he is, and we'd gladly give a large reward to recover the amount of the robbery."

The two older gentlemen took a look at the picture and then passed it to me. An exclamation of surprise had almost passed my lips, but I was a fortune seeker myself, and here was an unexpected opening. The picture was that of Fred Morell. Why should I not win the reward offered for the recovery of the stolen money? I had seen the wire-tapper, and I knew the man who had so successfully played his part in Birmingham.

Two days later I was on my way to visit the Morells. I had no idea that Fred would be there to receive me, but then he was not the chief attraction! I had said nothing to the two old gentlemen of what I knew, or what I had in mind! But I had decided to play the novel part of a detective, and lay the foundation for some such fortune as I had always expected to inherit.

Fred Morell met me at the door of his house, and a welcome could not have been more hearty. His mother was one of the most gracious of the old school ladies, and her daughter was even more fascinating in her wondrous beauty that when she had won my love beyond the ocean. I could not enjoy such hospitality and then bring a sorrow worse than death upon those who offered it. I asked a private talk with Fred, and frankly told him what I had learnt, and how I had started out to recover the stolen money. There was mingled anger and contempt in his face as he answered me.

"You have taken me for a scoundrel again," he said; "but I must admit the force of the evidence. Cousin Bob has broken loose once more. Seen apart, we have always been taken one for the other. He is a wonderful man, and his talents, properly directed, would win him almost any position. But his inclination is to go wrong, and he does not restrain it. Your mission is to bring him to book. If you like, I will go this far with you. He is rich through inheritance and fraud. Together we will run him down and secure a return of the money lost by the bank. We will make him leave the country for good, but without such an arrangement I will lend you no assistance. He is the first to bring disgrace on the family name, and I care more for it than for his punishment."

A load was lifted from my heart, and never was there a more delightful Christmas spent than in that old homestead. There I was convinced that Margie's hand was mine when I should claim it, and time justifies the blissful confidence.

In London we found the man whom I had surprised in hunting. Through fear he was induced to discover the whereabouts of "Cousin Bob." With the sauvity of a diplomat and a running fire of wit, he accepted our terms. He assured us with unblushing raillery, that the manager's daughter had pierced his heart, that he had voluntarily decided upon a residence abroad, and that it afforded him inexpressible pleasure to comply with our wishes.

I put the bank on its feet again, made the old manager the happiest man in the country, tickled Uncle Bruff, so that he named me his sole heir, and made Margie Morell my wife. I'll say nothing of myself, but Mrs. Dr. Tom Curran's receptions are the most popular and most sought after in one of the greatest cities of the country.

Horace Ray.

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## I'VE FOUND IT AT LAST.

EVERY reader of *Short Stories* should make a point of securing a copy of *Home Notes*, now on sale. With every number will in future be given away a complete novel and a coloured plate.

HARPER T.—Yes, dogs are very great pets among the ladies of fashion in Paris, and a special industry has been created in consequence. Several shops are tenanted exclusively by outfitters for the canine race. Blankets, hats, coats, shoe-gloves, and lace handkerchiefs of the most luxurious kind are purchased by women for the sole use of their pampered pets.

R. V.—The "sinking fund" is composed of that money put aside by the Government for the liquidation of the National Debt. As the bonds purchased are subsequently withdrawn from circulation, they are said to be "sunk."

RESULT of "Empress" Competition will appear next week.

W. D. D.—There is no difference whatever between the words Tsar and Czar. The Russian alphabet contains many letters for which the English has no equivalent; consequently, various spellings of the same Russian word have been adopted by different authorities in the endeavour to convey the true Russian pronounciation.

LAMP.—The most curious city in the world is situated on Saginaw Bay, an arm of Lake Huron. It is without a name, has a population of about 500, and consists of modern huts on wheels, to the number of 150, which, when the fishing season arrives, are rolled on to the ice in the bay.

C. S. L.—The word "Parliament" first appeared in the laws of England in 1272. Previous to that the law-making community was called the "Witanagemot."

COLLET.—Certainly your experiment proves that the sustaining powers of chocolate are not over-estimated. Two or three years ago a very much greater test was made by a Frenchwoman, who for sixty days took no other form of food. At the end of that time she had only lost fifteen pounds in weight.

JABEZ.—The custom of which you speak obtains among the daughters of the House of Hapsburg, whose bridal trains, on finishing an honourable career in the ballroom, are bestowed, after the ceremony, on the church whose sacred floor they have swept. During the centenary celebration at Rennweg the altar floor was covered with a sheen of satin and silver that had once formed part of Marie Antoinette's wedding-dress.

WORKMAN.—You are certainly better off than the Italian labourer. He may be worthy of his hire, but he receives wretched pay nevertheless. One franc twenty-five centimes (one shilling), sometimes even eighty-five centimes (eightpence halfpenny), for a day's work of thirteen hours, with cooked herbs and black bread for food — this is the usual rate of pay.

A. N.—Windsor Castle was first used as a Royal residence 788 years ago.

PUZZLED inquires: "Is it usual for a lady to pass in the street a gentleman with whom she danced a few nights before, without bowing?"———Introductions at a dance are generally acknowledged to be a mere formality to be gone through before two people can dance together; but they do not justify a continuance of the acquaintance, unless it is the wish of both persons concerned

V. C.—The reason decaying wood looks luminous in the dark is because it is really undergoing a slow combustion.

W. S. asks: "How is it that as a rule deaf people can hear what is said to them better in the midst of a din than when all is quiet around them?"———Because the increased noise helps to make up the volume of sound necessary to reach their impaired organs. An amusing illustration of this fact was afforded by a very deaf old gentleman, who lived quite alone. On the very rare occasion when he had a visitor, he used to keep poking the fire and causing the ashes to rattle on to the grate, so that by the help of the additional noise he might catch what his caller had to say.

M. P.—An "embargo" is an order from the Government, usually issued in time of war, or threatening hostilities, prohibiting the departure of ships or goods from some or all parts of the country.

M. L.—The cross mark still used occasionally instead of a signature did not originate in ignorance. In mediæval times, it was always appended to a signature as an attestation of good faith.

A. H. asks: "Is the Mastership of the Mint a political office?"———It is, and it isn't. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is the *ex officio* Master of the Mint, and the Parliamentary representative of that department, but the executive duties are discharged by a Deputy Master, whose office has nothing whatever to do with politics.

G. G.—A certificate of birth, death or marriage, costs 3s. 7d.—1s. for the search, and 2s. 7d. for the certificate.

H. N.—The Stars and Stripes of the American flag were in all probability borrowed from the family arms of George Washington, which consisted of three stars in the upper portion and three bars across the escutcheon.

L. G. L.—Like many other people, you are confusing marriage by special license and marriage by ordinary license. It is the former that is rare, such a license being granted only in very exceptional cases, and costing nearly £50. On the other hand, an ordinary license can be obtained for about as many shillings, and is frequently used instead of marriage by banns.

CITIZEN wants to know if the Mansion House plate is private or civic property.———The plate belongs to the Mansion House, for use at banquets during successive mayoralties. For many years it has been the custom for the outgoing Lord Mayor to add to it by the presentation of a suitably engraved gold, silver-gilt, or silver "loving-cup," or other article of the kind.

A. B. C.—There are several different parts of the earth that enjoy perpetual sunshine. On the coast of Peru, for instance, where, although it may be misty sometimes, the blue sky is always visible through the whitish veil during the day. In the Sahara, when the sun is above the horizon, the high lands of Iran, various parts of Turkestan and China, and also in Australia between the southern colonies and the Gulf of Carpentaria, the sun is always to be seen.

N. S.—The reason lightning travels in a zigzag course is because it passes through different strata of air, and on being resisted in its passage, turns from side to side to find the easiest course.

GERTRUDE.—If your rubies are of the true pigeon-blood colour, they are undoubtedly of great value; in fact, a ruby of this description is, broadly speaking, worth ten times its weight in diamonds.

C. N. wants to know whether the marines should be considered as sailors or soldiers.———It would seem more natural to class them with the naval service, for although on the one hand their uniform is military, as are also their duties, especially in the infantry, yet, on the other hand, their name has to be taken into consideration and also the fact that the force is raised and paid by the Admiralty. Their duties, too, are performed mainly on board ship.


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Lot 7.—**10,000 Special Extra Quality, Heavy Loom Kitchen Table Cloths**, made from the heaviest and strongest Linen Yarns. Numerous artistic patterns. Specially recommended for hard wear. Warranted to give the best possible satisfaction, being very neat, inexpensive, and durable.

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Size 68in. by 62in., price 2s. 2d. each, or 3 for 5s. 11d.

Lot 22.—10s. 6d. White Scotch Blankets for 5s. 9d. per pair, measuring about 56in. by 76in.; light, warm, and durable. Admittedly the cheapest blankets ever offered. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 15s. 6d. Satisfaction guaranteed or money returned. — **10s. 6d. White Scotch Blankets for 5s. 6d.**

**25s. Special Heavy Blankets for 14s. 9d.**

Lot 23.—25s. Special Heavy Witney Yorkshire Blankets for 14s. 9d., measuring 75in. by 96in. Manufactured entirely of pure long staple wool, bleached by the sun and beautifully white. Give endless wear, and are easily washed. For perfection of finish, durability, and economy, they are unequalled. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 42s. Money returned if not approved.

## WITNEY BLANKETS.

EXCEPTIONAL VALUE.

Lot 24.—600 pairs of best quality Witney Blankets, with fancy borders, very soft, warm, of great durability. Made from the best wool, and warranted to give every satisfaction. Prices given below are little more than half the original cost.

| Size | Weight. | Price per Pair. | 3 Pairs for |
|---|---|---|---|
| 53in. by 70in. | 4lb. | 6s. 3d. | 18s. |
| 60in. by 80in. | 6lb. | 7s. 9d. | 22s. |
| 70in. by 90in. | 8 lb. | 11s. 6d. | 33s. |
| 75in. by 96in. | 9lb. | 13s. 0s. | 37s. |
| 80in. by 90in. | 10 lb. | 15s. 3d. | 43s. |
| 86in. by 104in. | 11lb. | 16s. 9d. | 48s. |

Lot 30.—9s. Bleached Twill Sheets for 4s. 11d., measuring 64in. by 84in. Made from the best cotton yarns, thoroughly shrunk, soft finish, and hemmed ready for use. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 14s. 3d. Satisfaction guaranteed. — **9s. Twilled Sheets for 4s. 11d.**

**15s. 6d. Sheets for 7s. 11d.**

Lot 31.—15s. 6d. Bleached Twill Sheets for 7s. 11d., measuring 90in. by 100in. Made from the best cotton yarns, thoroughly shrunk, soft, finish, and hemmed ready for use. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 22s. Money returned if not approved.

Lot 39.—1,500 yards of Best Quality Kidderminster Carpeting, 36 inches wide, at 1s. 11d. per yard; usual price 3s. 6d. per yard. Can be supplied in numerous handsome and effective designs and rich colourings to harmonise with all requirements. Impossible to repeat this offer. Money returned if not approved. — **3s. 6d. Best Quality Kidderminster Carpeting for 1s. 11d.**

**3s. Best Brussels Stair Carpet for 1s. 9d.**

Lot 48.—3s. Brussels Carpeting for 1s. 9d. per yard, 22 inches wide. Handsomely bordered, superior quality, light and dark shades, magnificent design and colourings. Satisfaction guaranteed or money returned.

# 10,000 RUGS

GIVEN AWAY.

GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.

Lot 50.—**THIS PHENOMENAL OFFER** is made to the readers of *Short Stories* only. On receipt of Postal Order for **6s.**, or 74 stamps, we will forward DIRECT FROM OUR LOOMS to your address, one of our **10/6** genuine **SEAMLESS, WOVEN, REVERSIBLE CARPETS**, suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., handsomely bordered and woven in 50 different patterns and art colourings to suit all requirements, and **large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room.** These Carpets will be sold as an advertisement for the goods of the British Carpet Weaving Company BELOW THE ACTUAL COST OF PRODUCTION. They are made of material equal to wool, and, being a speciality of our own, can only be obtained Direct from our Looms, thus saving the Purchasers all Middle Profits.

**GIVEN AWAY.—WITH EVERY CARPET WE SHALL ABSOLUTELY GIVE AWAY A VERY HANDSOME RUG TO MATCH; OR WE WILL SEND TWO CARPETS AND TWO RUGS FOR 10/6.**

**MONEY WILLINGLY RETURNED IF NOT APPROVED.**

THOUSANDS of REPEAT ORDERS & UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS RECEIVED.

"SHORT STORIES" COUPON.
On receipt of this Coupon and P.O.O. for amount we guarantee to send any goods as above.
THE BRITISH CARPET WEAVING CO.

# BRUSSELETTE CARPETS.

## ADMITTEDLY THE CHEAPEST IN THE WORLD.

Seamless, Woven, and Reversible, Rich Turkey Patterns and Colourings, Superior Quality, with Handsome Border to match; a Marvel of Excellence and Beauty.

| Lot 60. SIZES and PRICES. No. | ft. | in. | ft. | in. | Sale Price. | Former Price. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 9 | 0 | by 6 | 0 | 5/6 | 9/0 |
| 2 | 9 | 0 | by 7 | 6 | 7/0 | 11/9 |
| 3 | 9 | 0 | by 9 | 0 | 8/6 | 13/6 |
| 4 | 10 | 6 | by 7 | 6 | 8/9 | 13/9 |
| 5 | 10 | 6 | by 9 | 0 | 10/0 | 15/6 |
| 6 | 12 | 0 | by 9 | 0 | 11/6 | 18/0 |

| Lot 60. SIZES and PRICES. No. | ft. | in. | ft. | in. | Sale Price. | Former Price. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 12 | 0 | by 10 | 6 | 13/6 | 20/6 |
| 8 | 13 | 6 | by 10 | 6 | 15/3 | 24/0 |
| 9 | 12 | 0 | by 12 | 0 | 15/3 | 24/0 |
| 10 | 13 | 6 | by 12 | 0 | 17/0 | 27/0 |
| 11 | 15 | 0 | by 12 | 0 | 19/0 | 32/0 |
| 12 | 18 | 0 | by 12 | 0 | 22/9 | 36/0 |

These Carpets are splendid imitations of real Brussels Carpets, the designs having been carefully copied from the originals, both as regards colourings and patterns, so that when in use it is almost impossible, except by close scrutiny, to detect the difference. All designs are registered, and deservedly considered works of art. We can confidently recommend them for use in the dining and drawing rooms, or any rooms and landings where hard wear is a necessity.

## GIVEN AWAY.

As an advertisement for the introduction of these goods to all readers of *Short Stories* we have decided to give away to every purchaser a very handsomely-woven Hearthrug, 6 feet long and 3 feet wide, to match carpets in colours, etc.

THOUSANDS of REPEAT ORDERS & UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS RECEIVED.

DEAR SIR,— 9 Bedford Row, High Wycombe, Bucks.

I have seen some of the Carpets and rugs sent by your firm, and think they are really a marvel. Please forward goods as follows, etc.—Yours faithfully, Rev. F. H. MAY.

**SATISFACTION GUARANTEED OR MONEY WILLINGLY REFUNDED.**

All Orders despatched same day as received. Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to J. HARGREAVES, and crossed UNION BANK. ADDRESS:

**THE BRITISH CARPET WEAVING COMPANY, Sale Dept., 31 OLD STREET, LONDON, E.C.**

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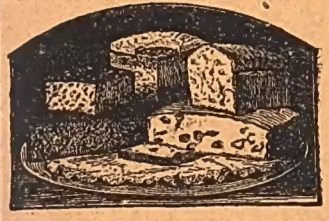

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